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LETTERS

OF

ANNA SEWARD:

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WRITTEN BETWEEN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1807.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOLUME III.



EDINBURGH:
Printed by George Ramsay & Company,
FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY, EDINBURGH;
AND LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
WILLIAM MILLER, AND JOHN MURRAY,
LONDON.

1811.

N.N. h-1


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LETTERS

OF

ANNA SEWARD.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Mrs Piozzi.

April 15, 1790.

Thank you, dearest Madam, for your kind letter; the attention of those we love sooths and cheers the sorrowing heart. Many were the pangs I felt in an everlasting separation from him, by whose side I lived during so very many years. Let me not, however, damp the glow of your animated and animating spirit, by unavailing descant on the mournful theme. Various consolations begin to insinuate their soft light into my bosom, and to meliorate and change the throbs of anguish into sighs of tender regret, and [illegible] wakeful remembrance.

Mr Saville has written to me of the polite attention with which you and Mr Piozzi have honoured him. From my earliest youth, I have lived in the habit of observing his naturally fine

talents, cultivated by classic erudition; the generosity of his spirit, and the uncommon benevolence and singleness of his heart. They do credit to his profession, and render him worthy the friendship of the ingenious and the good.

I smile at the excess of my dear Mrs Piozzi's politeness, when she tells me that my observations on Dr Darwin's splendid poem will instruct her. Without a hope so proud, and, if I had entertained it, so vain, I proceed to tell her that it appears to me the masterly result of a creative, elevated, and brilliant imagination, in whose gems no sullying veins of inelegance are found,—that I think the numbers more highly polished, of more grand and more spirited harmonies even than Pope's; that I apprehend this superior majesty of sound is occasioned by the frequent trochaic accent on the first syllable of the lines, and its superior spirit by their frequently commencing with a verb active; though I confess that what is gained in force and grandeur by these habits, is lost in ease. Simplicity seems the only grace that may not be found in this poem; but the subject, having no natural interest for the understanding or the passions, it was necessary to clothe it in the most gorgeous hues of imagery, and the most studied magnificence of language. They were all at the command of this poet. Being composed of short

descriptions, and, by its similies and allusions, highly ingenious and entertaining, though not always very apposite, the book may, without injury to its claims upon the attention, but rather to their advantage, be alternately laid aside and resumed. "The intellectual, like the corporeal eye, is soon fatigued by gazing on eminences, glittering with the sun, and turns aching away to verdure, or seeks repose upon masses of shadow."—In fine, the riches of the historic, mythologic, and fabulous allusions, the extreme felicity with which the mechanism of the ancient and modern arts is brought to the eye, entitle their master to a very high place in the temple of the British muses.

Though modern novels are, in general, my aversion, yet I find many charms in Julia. Certainly Helen's style in prose bears no proportionate excellence to that of her charming poetry; and this work is barren of incident, her preface anticipating what little plot there is. But the characters are finely drawn. The similies appear to me much too frequent, and to give stiffness to the style. Without metaphor there is no spirit; indeed genius cannot write without it; but set similies, often introduced, do not become familiar and narrative prose. The first ode, to poetry, enchants me; it is often sublime, and everywhere beautiful. The sonnets are sweet and interesting;

they delight me from the ingenuity of the thoughts, even though some of them have the defect of illegitimacy; and though all of them want the characteristic excellence of a sonnet, by the sense being carried on to the end of the line, excluding the varied pause, which, undulating through the lines, produces that impressive energetic grace, the glory of those few best of Milton's sonnets;—and they are surely the models of that species of writing. I wish the linnet and thrush verses had been away,—such subjects are beneath the elevated talents of our friend,—she should leave them to the minor poets. Helen is also a little out in her zoology—the linnet, complimented in this work as the feathered songster latest silent, is, in reality, mute one of the earliest. He is the bird of spring, seldom sings in autumn—it is the robin that pipes his sweet requiem to its expiring graces. She speaks also of the various notes of the blackbird. Mr Piozzi could tell her that they are very few in number, though melodious, soft, and full. It is the lark and nightingale that give us the various songs.

Ah! no, my dear Madam, Bath or London would be much too gay a scene for me. The local spells of the Close of Lichfield, formed by the remembrance of past happiness, are too powerful for me to break. My extreme attach-

ment to this house, in which I have lived since I was thirteen years old, and the generous moderation of my episcopal landlord, tempt me to try if I cannot remain in it. It will require my utmost frugality to make my moderate income, not quite amounting to four hundred pounds per annum, support the inevitable expence of so spacious a dwelling. Bath and London journies are ill-calculated to such a plan. I must content myself with admiring and loving you all at a distance.

Sophia expressing a desire, in her last, to know my opinion of our Helen's novel, I take the liberty of leaving this letter open for her perusal; from the, alas! severe scarcity of my leisure.

Adieu, dear Mrs Piozzi! My best regards to him you best love. Believe me always yours.

LETTER II.

Miss Weston.

April 9, 1790.

Justly, dear Sophia, do you term my late sufferings the pangs of nature. They were most

keen, and might have been fatal, had not a plenteous effusion from my temples, by leeches, assuaged the new and intolerable shooting pains which had seized my brain. I believe bodily, succeeding to mental anguish, is often of use to the latter; and I think it proved so to me. Since my mind has recovered the power of employing itself, business has, in some degree, dispersed the shades of dejection—yet still there are hours!—Time will, I trust, more and more assuage the selfish regret of my deprivations, assisted by that blessed hope which draws the sting of death, and robs the grave of its victory.

Though, during those hours in which this stroke was descending, and through some which elapsed after it had fallen, my heart longed for the consolation of Giovanni's sympathy, yet I soon became thankful that he was spared the participation of circumstances which must have borne hard upon his sensibility. He writes to me with thankful pleasure for your late kind attentions to him.

You know I always alike divest myself of personal partiality, and of personal dislike, to authors, when I comment upon their works. Solicitous for the literary honour of the age in which I live, I open every new publication that I think it worth

while to open, with a warm desire to be pleased; prepared to admire and to object, as my abstracted feelings shall be impressed, and as my unbiassed judgment shall dictate.

Unwilling to believe it possible that a novel should be written by Mr Hayley, without bearing a much higher reputation than seemed possessed by Cornelia, and having no time to waste upon novels which are not very first-rate, I did not seek this with assiduity. Last week, and not till then, chance threw it in my way. It appears to me a work often illuminated with rays of wit and picturesque imagination; evidently written by a person of learning, from its richness in classic allusions, and in poetic quotations; but the author is so much a mannerist, that every different personage of the novel writes and speaks in precisely the same style—a style loaded with epithets, and in everlasting recurrence—"the dear, delightful, dainty widow;"—"the lively, interesting, enchanting Seymour;"—or "the rash, devoted, abominable Seymour;"—"the dear, feeling, heroic little William;"—"the delicate, devout, incomparable Guliana;"—"the muscular, luxuriant, glowing Caroline." In short, scarce a name mentioned through the work, without three epithets prefixed —which all the characters bestow, as if by compact, upon each other.

The exalted conduct of Cornelia required that every possible dignity should be thrown around her. I lost all patience at the impertinent familiarity with which alike the lover and her friends talk of the dear *dainty* widow, in disgusting application of the foolish song's burden,

"O she's a dainty widow—widow."

That a love-sick miss should give her swain the romantic epithet *enchanting*, would be nothing strange; but that the grave and reverend Audley, the philosophic Edward, and indeed every soul of them, should talk for ever about the *enchanting* Seymour, is surely very unnatural;—most of all, when Edward, conveying the dead body of Seymour back to England, observes—"the enchanting Seymour, even in his coffin," &c. How ill that gay enamoured appellation suits the mention of the solemn receptacle, every heart, I should suppose, must feel.

The only part of this novel, often so ingenious, yet, on the whole, so tiresome—the only part that took strong hold upon my passions, was Guliana's solemn visit to the buried corse of her lover. It is very fine.

Three times, in the progress of this work, is expectation excited violently, and sees its labour-

ing mountain delivered of a mouse;—first, in the promised atonement for the girl's bad taste in her blacksmith; next, in the mysterious manner in which Seymour abruptly quits Cornelia, upon an avowed secret plan, which is never explained at all, since the important interview is the result of an unforeseen circumstance; and, lastly, in the person of the unknown who corresponds with Cornelia, and who, after our being led to expect shall prove some very interesting person of the drama, already known to the reader, comes out to be a brother of Louisa's, which brother we had never heard of before.

Upon a review of these absurdities, we must either conclude, that it is not Mr Hayley's, or be sorry that so illustrious a writer should stoop to the frivolous taste of the age, and attempt a line of writing, to which his genius can have no bias, or much greater excellence would have been the result.

Giovanni told me, in a late letter, how kindly you rejoiced in my attempt to save myself the pangs of quitting this dear scene; but I am afraid wisdom points to the nutshell mansion, promising many excursive pleasures from thence, which discretion cannot allow to a palace residence, with an income so limited.

April 10th.

LAST night, dear Sophia, Giovanni returned safe to his home, his family, and his friends. Accept my best thanks, for the kind letter he has brought me from you.

Its warm-hearted plan is replete with gratification and indulgence to every wish I could form for an expedition to town. Under your auspices, the powers of friendship and harmony put on their very strongest attractions. I sigh that the repellant forces are armed with irresistible circumstances, which it would be fruitless to enumerate.

I am most willing to confide in the truth of your pencil, that describes charming Mrs Piozzi in colours so amiable. My inclinations felt every disposition in her favour, till certain circumstances appeared to me as wearing an appearance of cold neglect towards our Bath friends, who loved her so much; but conclude they arose from mutual misconstruction.

Human hearts and human intellects present parodoxes on every side. None appear more strange to me, than when a woman of your fine talents, Sophia, speaks with cold contempt of that science which, through all ages, has been

the convoy of every thing that is great and beautiful from the human soul;—when you profess not to consider it as a subject worth much attention, though you may now and then take a fancy to some of its effusions. The confession appears stranger still, from recollecting how often you devote the most eager attention to the frothy pages of a modern novel;—how rapturously you wrote about that to me insipid romance, the Adelaide de Courcy!

Since my last letter contained no reflections upon your want of taste for my favourite species of poetry, the grave Miltonic sonnet, I wonder you choose to villify it to *me*, by so uncharacteristic a definition, to call it a rough rumbling composition of fourteen lines. I flatter myself, that my ear and taste, so long devoted to the study of poetic harmonies, are incapable of liking a rough rumbling composition, whatever title it may assume.

But why talk I of these matters to one who professes herself indifferent about them? The round of company and dissipation in which you are involved, leave you little leisure for intellectual discrimination. When I reflect upon the strong and brilliant talents you received from nature, I sigh over your passion for cards and

crowds; but whatever be your pursuits, may peace, cheerfulness, joy, health, and prosperity be the result! My heart is fully sensible of your kindness to me on a thousand accounts. It was infinitely kind to wish, not only to receive my troublesome self, but Giovanni's dear Elizabeth, at the approaching Abbey music. She is grateful to you for that desire, and for the beautiful nose-gay you sent her.

Dear friend, I am far from well; my nerves are injured by my late anxieties and sorrows. It is in tranquil scenes only that they are likely to recover their tone. Since Mrs Weston spared you to Bath last spring, and to Margate last summer, I should hope she might spare you to Lichfield, if you could persuade yourself to endure the stupidity of a provincial town, lately accustomed to gayer and more interesting scenes.

How severely is the spring repressed by these fierce east winds, after having been nursed into premature bloom, by the hybernal mildness!

> "The odorous chaplet
> Worn by old Winter on his icy crown,"

Makes us grieve the more to see the vernal garlands thus nipt.

You expect to be charmed by the Abbey music, and charmed you will be; but the chorusses are its great *fort;* there is an inevitable air of meagre contrast to them in the songs. No single human voice can sufficiently fill a space so immense, or appear, after the chorusses, more than as a gurgling rill near the falls of Niagara. Adieu!

LETTER III.

Miss Williams.

April 21, 1789.

Much and various is the kindness for which I have to thank you, my dear Miss Williams; for your consoling sympathy, for the desire you express for our speedy meeting in town, and your acceptable present; the last effusions that shone in the public eye, from an imagination, of which genius and beauty are the constant associates.

I am pleased with many things in these volumes*, and charmed with others; with the son-

* Julia, a novel by this Lady.

nets, notwithstanding the illegitimacy of some of them, and the absence in all of that varied pause, which appears to me the characteristic grace of that order of verse; with the sweet little pensive elegies, which look back to the banks of the Evan, breathing very beautifully, that local tenderness which is so dear to my taste;—and above all, with that very fine ode on the power of poetry. The characters in this novel are drawn with great spirit and truth.

Perhaps I should speak to you of some things I less like in this ingenious work, if I thought you liked that analyzing ingenuousness, with which I have written to you of your former publications. Taking no notice of those observations, I conclude you thought them superfluous and immaterial. Else it is my rule, when I write to authors, whose compositions I think worth investigation, to prove the sincerity of my praise by a confession of those general features, or particular passages of the composition, which appear to me less admirable.

If Cornelia is Mr Hayley's, it is surely far below the level of his talents, though it is, in some respects, as much above that of ordinary pens.

It is true, my dear Miss Williams, the existence of him, whose death yet sits heavy on my heart, had been long destitute of all corporeal

and intellectual energy; but it is a state of severe suffering alone, which, thank God, his was not, that can banish the yearning regrets of affection for the loss of even the most faded and imperfect resemblance of what once was.

I am, however, most thankful, that the heart-dear gratifications of protecting, comforting, and caressing that desolated form so long were mine; since the desolation, though almost total, was not to himself drear. Pain seldom visited his weak and calmly torpid frame, and never his mind during several past years; one period, of about two years excepted, in which his failing memory about his property, made him perpetually fancying that he had none, and was become poor; except in that interval, his life had been happy above the common lot. No unpleasing circumstances ever dwelt upon his joyous imagination.

That dread of dissolution, so natural to every human being, on the startling symptoms of its approach, was to him precluded by the gathering mists upon his intellects, which veiled the prospect of the grave.

The pleasure he took in my attendance and caresses, survived till within the three last months, amidst the general wreck of sensibility. His reply to my inquiries after his health, was

always "Pretty well, my darling;" and when I gave him his food and his wine,—"That's my darling," with a smile of comfort and delight, inexpressibly dear to my heart. I often used to ask him if he loved me, his almost constant answer,—'Do I love my own eyes?"

These pleasures are past, dear Miss Williams, and their recollection is yet too mournfully impressed, to admit an idea of mixing soon with the gay and busy world. Adieu! Yours faithfully.

LETTER IV.

EDWARD JERNINGHAM, ESQ.

April 3, 1790.

I WISH the compositions in question were more worthy the honour of your solicitude; but to print them by single volumes, would be dying by inches, from the anxiety and dread I feel in publishing. Settling my father's affairs, with the daily-recurring duties of my pen, not without impoliteness to be omitted, must engross my attention for a long time. I am far from being well. Indisposition disarms exertion, and renders the

wish of tranquillity an Aaron's rod in the bosom, swallowing up every other desire.

Respecting the illustrious martyr of benevolence—surely his apotheosis has been long since given!

> " To that bright virtue's utmost scope
> His ardent aim did Hayley raise,
> As high, as mortal hand may hope
> To shoot the glittering shaft of praise."

And shall I presume to shoot in that strong bow?

One of the noblest odes our language boasts, in the first volume of Mr Hayley's poems, must have escaped your attention, or you had felt that the subject, rich as it is, has been exhausted.

With a grateful sense of your partiality in my favour, I remain your faithful and obedient servant.

LETTER V.

To Mr COURTENAY, on his Pamphlet entitled PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE LATE REVOLUTIONS IN FRANCE.

May 17, 1790.

I AM extremely gratified by the recent proof you have now given me that I live in your remembrance.

I love genius, wit, and spirit, and knowledge, too well not to be charmed with your pamphlet; and peace and order too much not to be almost frightened at it; for, on my word, the irony cuts deep, and respect for our boasted constitution, as we read, bleeds at every vein. You are just such a champion for subordination, kingship, and episcopacy, as Mr Hayley for ancient virginity. Bishops, nobles, monarchs, and old maids, may cry out to you both,

> "An open foe may prove a curse,
> But a pretended friend is worse."

We have our political grievances; but by no means of so oppressive a nature as those which justified the

exertions of France. They will be much for her happiness and glory, if she uses her victory with wisdom and justice—but, I am afraid, that does not seem probable from the present aspect of her affairs.

Your mock censure must give great triumph to the dissenters; your sarcastic commendation no small umbrage to the hierarchy; but let plump canons slumber in their stalls,—

" The saint in crape be twice a sai

—let sour presbytery growl on in exclusion, ere democratic indignation overwhelm the peace of this country!

I am particularly pleased with that passage in this humorous tract which ridicules the ruin of politeness by the extirpation of monarchy. The simile that closes it, appears to me perfectly new, and ingenious in the first degree. I almost grudge it to prose.

With much esteem, I remain, Sir, your faithful and obliged servant.

LETTER VI.

H. Cary, Esq.

May 18, 1790.

In the fortnight which has elapsed since I had the pleasure of hearing from you, my friend, I hope you have discovered some congenial spirits, who rove academic bowers with dispositions suited to the purposes for which they were reared. The sons of vice and frivolity will affect to despise you for pursuits so far nobler than their own; but, when your genius and application shall have distinguished you in the public exercises, they will be taught to feel their own comparative littleness, and involuntarily revere what they are too stupid to emulate.

I see you, in my mind's eye, wandering solitary on the banks of the Cherwell, whose coy graces the picturesque muse of Mr T. Warton has so beautifully described. I wish you could procure the honour of an introduction to him. You know I am an enthusiast about his writings, in despite of my indignation at his observing that Milton had a bad ear. Milton! whose measures are so

various, so grand, so dulcet, so undulating, so exquisitely graceful, except when they assume judicious harshness for picturesque purposes!

You will find inclosed a letter recommending you to Mr Croft. Adieu. Yours.

LETTER VII.

Mr Birkbeck*.

May 20, 1790.

Sir,—The passage upon which you question me, is in a note to one of Major André's three letters, published with the monody I wrote upon his death. Previous to that publication, I showed these letters to my father, who observed, that he was mistaken in supposing the name Lichfield meant the field of blood;—"that its true meaning was the field of dead bodies, alluding to a battle fought between the Romans and the British Christians in the Diocletian Persecution, where the latter were massacred—that the three slain kings, with their burying-place, Barrowcap-Hill, near the town, and the cathedral, in a minia-

* Hartford, near Blandford, Dorset.

ture, form the arms of the city; that Lich is still a word in use, bearing the same meaning; the church-yard gates, through which funerals pass, being called Lich-gates, vulgarly Light-gates." This is certainly the received tradition of this place. The city-arms, as above described, are now over the town-hall, in rude sculpture; and the remains of ancient tumuli are yet visible upon Barrowcap-Hill, rising in the outskirts of the town. Your letter induced me to apply to Mr Buckeridge of this place, a gentleman learned in ancient history. He says there are many evidences of a massacre of the Christians in the Diocletian Persecution, which is universally supposed to have given the city its name, Lichfield, meaning the field of dead bodies. But he thinks the tradition fabulous respecting the battle and the kings; observing, that a battle supposes resistance; but how, says he, could an unarmed company of devotees resist or defend themselves against a Roman soldiery?

Mr Buckeridge has been so obliging to furnish me with references to the historians who mention this massacre, as follow: "Vide Bedæ Historiam, Paris edition, 1681, page 33. See also, in the same author, an account of the life, death, and sepulture of Saint Chad, page 191-2, which is worth reading. I will transcribe," he adds,

" two or three lines: ' Habuit autem sedem Episcopalem, in loco qui vocatur Lycid-feld, in quo, et defunctus et sepultus est; ubi usque hodie, sequentium quoque provinciæ illius episcoporum sedes est.' Vide Plot's history of Staffordshire, page 398, who, giving a pretty full account of the massacre of the Christians, says, ' finding them in the exercise of their religion, he took and carried them to the place where Lichfield now stands, and martyred one thousand of them there, leaving their bodies unburied, to be devoured by birds and beasts; whence the place still retains the name of Lichfield, or Cadaverum Campus, the field of dead bodies; the city having, for their device, an escutcheon, with many martyrs in it, in several manners mangled.'

" Vide Saxon Chronicle, published by Gibson, 1692, latter part, page 34.

" *Licetfeld*,— Lichfield, by Ingulphus and Huntingdon;—Licethfeld, by Simon Dunelm;—Lichesfeld, according to Gervasius;—Lichefelde, by Bromton, and Lychfeld, by Knighton, *i. e.* says he (Gibson) ut nonnullis visum, Cadaverum Campus (Field of Dead Bodies,) et si alii malunt interpretare Campum Irriguum, ab aqua qua in duas partes urbs divisa est hodie Lichfeld, in agro Staffordiensi.

" Vide the accurate historian, Dr Heylin's Help

to History, published by Paul Wright, B. D. 1773, page 281, says,

" Lichfield, the chief city of Staffordshire, signifieth, in the old Saxon tongue, the Field of Dead Bodies; so called, from a number of Christian bodies which lay massacred and unburied there, in the persecution raised by Diocletian. It is situated in a low and moorish ground, on a shallow pool, by which it is divided into two parts, but joined together by a bridge and causey both together, making a city of indifferent bigness." More evidences might be collected were they necessary; vide Leland, and Warton's Anglia Sacra." I am, Sir, your humble servant.

LETTER VIII.

THOMAS CHRISTIE, ESQ.

July 1, 1790.

YES, my kind friend, Heaven has at length deprived me of that dear parent to whom I was ever most tenderly attached, and whose infirmities, exciting my hourly pity, increased the pangs

of final separation. It was in vain that my reason reproached the selfishness of my sorrow.

I cannot receive, as my due, the praise you so lavish upon my filial attentions. Too passionate was my affection to have had any merit in devoting myself to its duties. All was irresistible impulse. I made no sacrifices, for pleasure lost its nature and its name, when I was absent from him. I studied his ease and comfort, because I delighted to see him cheerful; and, when every energy of spirit was sunk in languor, to see him tranquil. It was my assiduous endeavour to guard him from every pain, and every danger, because his sufferings gave me misery, and the thoughts of losing him anguish.

And thus did strong affection leave nothing to be performed by the sense of duty. I hope it would have produced the same attentions on my part; but I am not entitled to say that it would, or to accept of commendation for tenderness so involuntary.

It gives me pleasure that your prospects are so bright. A liberal and extended commerce may be as favourable to the expansion of superior abilities as any other profession; and it is certainly a much more cheerful employment than that of medicine. The humane physician must have his quiet perpetually invaded by the sorrows of

those who look anxiously up to him for relief, which no human art can, perhaps, administer.

I have uniformly beheld, with reverence and delight, the efforts of France to throw off the iron yoke of her slavery; not the less oppressive for having been bound with ribbands and lilies. Ill betide the degenerate English heart that does not wish her prosperity.

You ask me after Mrs Cowley. I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance—but am familiar with her ingenious writings. This age has produced few better comedies than her's.

You are very good to wish to see me in London; but I have no near view of going thither. You will be sorry to hear that I have lost my health, and am oppressed with symptoms of an hereditary and dangerous disease.

Lichfield has been my home since I was seven years old—this house since I was thirteen; for I am still in the palace, and do not think of moving at present. It is certainly much too large for my wants, and for my income; yet is my attachment so strong to the scene, that I am tempted to try, if I recover, what strict economy, in other respects, will do towards enabling me to remain in a mansion, endeared to me as the tablet on which the pleasures of my youth are impressed, and the

images of those that are everlastingly absent. Adieu. Yours.

LETTER IX.

Mrs Hayley.

July 27, 1790.

I am much obliged by my dear Mrs Hayley's kind letter, and by the welcome design it announces, of favouring me with her company; but I hope she will not limit her stay to the couple of days she mentions.

Thank you for the kind sympathy you express in my filial regrets, and in my loss of health. The affection for my father, which was ever very passionate, pity had so much increased as to more than balance, in the scale of sorrow, the consciousness of bodily and mental decay which so long preceded his death. Alas! there is a wide difference between words, in which we miss the vigour of the understanding, and everlasting silence.

Your observation, that woman is never so permanently dear to any man as to her father, is ge-

nerally just, and exceptions perhaps are few. It is difficult even for those who feel passion to distinguish it from affection. The difference is seldom known till the former is lost in unrestrained gratification. Men are rarely capable of pure unmixed tenderness to any fellow-creature except their children. In general, even the best of them, give their friendship to their male acquaintance, and their fondness to their offspring. For their mistress, or wife, they feel, during a time, a tenderness more ardent, and more sacred; a friendship softer and more animated. But this inexplicable, this fascinating sentiment, which we understand by the name of love, often proves an illusion of the imagination;—a meteor that misleads her who trusts it, vanishing when she has followed it into pools and quicksands, where peace and liberty are swallowed up and lost. By observations like these, your friend is perfectly reconciled to her "single blessedness;" so Shakespeare calls old-maidism—but it is, perhaps, too proud and boastful a term?

> "Who dreams, alas! of blessedness below?
> The hope-flush'd enterer on the stage of life,
> The youth to knowledge unchastized by sorrow!"

Adieu! Adieu.

LETTER X.

DAVID SAMWEL, ESQ.

August 16, 1790.

SIR,—I am very sorry for the death of your gallant, accomplished, and virtuous friend, Captain Trevanen, your associate under that benevolent hero Captain Cook;—sorry also that my sorrow must be fruitless;—yet assure yourself, were it in my power, I should have real and great satisfaction in obliging you, to whom I am myself so much obliged;—but, with me, every exertion and power of the imagination is insurmountably impeded by an oppressive and dangerous disease upon my lungs, which allows me no breath but what I obtain by effort, and makes my life resemble the existence of the dying. My physicians, finding my disease baffle the power of medicine, order me to the sea-side. I am preparing to set out, with much reluctance, to leave my home, and with little hope from my banishment.

You are too partial to me, in supposing it in my power to perpetuate the memory of the lost

Trevanen. So little value did the society, which struck a medal in honour of Captain Cook, set upon my poem on his death, that, while they avowedly presented one to every person who had taken public interest in his fate and virtues; while they gave Mr Green of this town a medal, merely for having displayed, in his museum, some relics of those illustrious voyages, they took no notice of me.

Nothing can be more interesting than your description of your deceased friend;—a voluntary victim, in the prime of his days, to the ambition of the empress;—yet, I confess, my sense of right and wrong always revolted against the idea of a man hazarding his life in the service of any country but his own—I mean in promoting its ambitious views of extended empire.

Adieu, Sir! and believe me always your obliged friend and servant.

LETTER XI.

MRS HAYLEY.

August 29, 1790.

MY dear Madam,—I am happy to hear that Mr Hayley's excursion has been delightful to him, and gratified by the kind wishes of your last for my recovery.

A few days respite from violent oppression on my breath, induced me to venture one morning's performance at Birmingham. Perhaps a vaporish idea, that it might be the last time I should have an opportunity of hearing the sublime Messiah, increased the desire of this excursion.

The thick air of Birmingham sat heavy on my lungs; but the dawn of a morning, fortunately cool, enabled me to enjoy the highest possible intellectual feast, with little alloy from corporal uneasiness. The oratorio was finely performed, though I never can like to hear it opened by a woman, even when that woman is Mara. The female tones want majesty for that solemn recitative.

Not daring to trust my animalities with the intense heats of the theatre, I went instantly to my excellent friend Lady Carhampton's pretty retreat, two miles from Birmingham. There she lives, dispensing the pleasures of hospitable kindness, and the blessings of attentive and extensive charity, after a life of splendour, deeply embittered by filial ingratitude. I was received by herself and her friend, with that animated welcome which can alone render absence from home desirable to a being so domestic as myself. Adieu. Yours.

LETTER XII.

Rev. Peter Homer.

Oct. 5, 1790.

Sir,—I thank you for your poetical present, the translations from Metastasio. They are a valuable little work; deserve a larger type, a greater expence of paper, and an higher price. They are often correct and elegant in their expression, and tuneful in their numbers. Permit me, Sir, to express my surprise and regret, that the ear which constructed such lovely, such exquisite,

such never-exceeded lines as the following, should often fall immeasurably beneath their excellence:

> " O, fool! that I should strive the seas to sow,
> Or trust to suns the dissoluble snow!
> For sure she trusts the sun, and sows the sea,
> Who hopes return of constancy from thee."

We can scarce believe that the author of them should endure the stiff inversion, the harsh cadence, and, forgive if I say, inelegant construction of so large a portion of the verses;—should address the subject of his eulogy in the second and third person promiscuously, nay, even in the same sentences. It is a liberty which our correct poets never take. I wish that you, who can write so well, would use the same discipline with your muse, that I have endeavoured to use with mine, and then she would not talk of a lady " teaching her tress to flow," instead of her tresses. You were not aware that this license of expression, trivial as it may seem, is obnoxious to the most ludicrous idea; that it irresistibly presents to the imagination a bald head, from which one solitary lock depends.

You bespeak my candour. Candour has always to me appeared to consist in being ingenuous. What says Prior, when he describes the should-be of artists' conduct to each other!

"Piqued by Protogenes' fame
From Co to Rhodes Apelles came;
To see a rival and a friend,
Prepar'd to censure and commend;
Here to absolve, and there object,
As art with candour might direct."

When an author, like yourself, shews that he can write finely, and yet frequently writes ill, it is the interest of envy to praise indiscriminately; that he may continue to mix the sullying drop with his gold so largely, as to rob his fame of its currency.

I am, Sir, your obliged and obedient servant.

LETTER XIII.

Mrs Martin.

Oct. 27, 1790.

I CONGRATULATE you upon the effects of your tansy tea; and hope it will continue its Lucinian powers. Perhaps you are not enough an heathen to understand the epithet—to know that Lucina is the goddess of child-bearing, whose protection it was usual to invoke in the days of Paganism.

Your caro sposo, who brought me this fruit-

ful intelligence, looked very well, though his step was not perfectly militaire. Seeing him since you have seen him, and leaving you, as he did, in a but recovering gout, you will be glad to hear of his good looks.

My health is considerably better since my excursion into Shropshire. I ventured to one of the morning music festivals at Shrewsbury, and heard Mr Saville open the Messiah with a pathos, an energy, and a grace that none ever excelled, and which I never heard equalled.

Our little city is about to lose its celestial characteristic of neither marrying, nor being given in marriage. The torch of Hymen has already blazed for Lord Donegall, as the papers have shewn you;—for Mrs Swinfen's sister, amiable and lovely Miss Ford, who has married Lord Colville's eldest son.

You remember my poor father's apartment.—I have stained the paper a light green, and ornamented it with fine prints, in handsome frames. It is the pleasantest winter-room in the house, where many are pleasant;—but the sun looks on this at noon, and gilds it on through the winter day.

Adieu! dear Mrs M., may you have a little longer health, succeeded by a comparatively little portion of pain, and crowned with a little living

creature, who shall a great deal more than a little recompence every thing!

LETTER XIV.

MRS ROBERTS.

Nov. 3, 1790.

GIVE me leave to congratulate you upon the acquisition your income receives by the dropping of that ripe and mellow fruit*, which is, I trust, transplanted into a kinder soil, where the storms of sickness and sorrow can never blow.

Clean, pretty, clever, faithful, sober, home-keeping Thomas has a Miss Mollyish terror of a gun, and is but a poor horseman. When he confessed these maidenisms, I despaired of his suiting the pleasant, prancing, pop-gun situation of butler at Prior's Lea, and was the less concerned to find him in treaty for another place.

Your young military cousin, Jauncey, has been at Mr White's a fortnight, with his pale, pretty wife, and a lovely infant girl in arms. They were

* The father of the lady's husband.—S.

much noticed by our Lichfield ladies and gentlemen. I was pleased to see that mark of respect paid to the recollection of my old friend*, whose beauty was once the boast of our city—whose conduct was so prudent—whose disposition so gentle. Young Mrs Jauncey likes us all mightily. She is in a sad state of health. I should think it must exhaust her little stock of bodily strength to nourish a profusion of pale brown hair, with a slight tint of amber. She suffers it to float in natural ringlets, unstained by powder, to the very bottom of her back, and wears neither hat, cap, nor cushion. Her sickly countenance, beneath these plenteous and dishevelled tresses, and a wildish look in eyes, sunk by want of health, make her exactly resemble my little print of Margaret's ghost,

> "Whose face is like an April morn
> Clad in a wintry cloud."

Here are an agreeable family, who have adorned the cathedral area since July last, and who stay with us till Christmas, Archdeacon Lee, his very amiable and pleasing wife, and his three lovely daughters. The eldest is just fifteen, beautiful

* Mrs Jauncey, senior, once the celebrated Miss Helen White of Lichfield.—*S.*

as the vernal morning, dimmed by no clouds, with all its rosy tints, and crystal lights. She is the finest unprofessional harpsichord player of her age I ever heard. Her father is a good performer on the violincello; a kind husband and parent; an admirable companion; and his droll songs are superior to every body's;—Edwin is nothing to him.

Yesterday morning, Sunday, Mr Inge preached in our choir, a sermon of great learning and ingenuity, composed on the arrival of our new and very fine organ. The discourse was upon church-music, its pleasure and utility; it concluded with —" and in conviction of the benefit devotion receives from sacred music, let us say, Halelujah to the God Most High!—and again let us say Halelujah!"—Instantly, by previous appointment, and entirely unexpected by the audience, the organ poured in the grand chorus from the Messiah:

" For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Our glorious organ pealed along the aisles, and the choir put forth all her energies in the execution;—her minstrels sung with their heart and soul. Surprised, affected, charmed—almost everybody wept with pleasure. I wish you had been there.

Scarcely have I left myself room on my paper to say adieu,—and yet again adieu!

LETTER XV.

MRS MOMPESSAN.

"*Colton, Dec.* 10, 1790.

YOU, my dear friend, having outlived complaints so similar to mine, is very encouraging;—yet why, when you say you hope I shall live to be old, do you add, though, when that time comes, you will be indifferent to every mortal object. The disparity between your age and mine, is not so great but that, should I attain the period, I may yet hope to enjoy your society; and if it pleases God to call you first away, I cannot believe that our spirits, on soaring above the earth, will lose all earthly consciousness. I hope, and wish to believe, that the remembrance of those affections, which, being in themselves pure, exalted our human nature, will accompany us when it shall become angelic. If the rich bad man in torments, could recollect his brothers with an affectionate solicitude, that they might escape his

fate, sure the attachments of benevolent spirits translated will not be extinguished. As yet I have seen only the extracts from Mr. Burke's pamphlet, which the newspapers presented. I am afraid the French carry the spirit of freedom too far;—but no powers of wit and eloquence can persuade me to think a government, so barbarously oppressive, ought to have stood—where, if a libertine of rank chose to debauch the wife of a tradesman, and found the husband an obstacle, —or the son of a man in high station marries against his consent,—a lettre de cachet could be procured to imprison the obnoxious person for life, amidst the solitary horrors of the Bastile; and perhaps have him chained by the neck to its accursed walls.

That dreadful sword hung over every head; and if the natural hilarity of the people made them sing and dance in a situation so perilous, ought that gaiety to suppress our wishes for their deliverance from such impending danger?

Now they have obtained it, I can only wish and hope that they may not abuse the blessings of their emancipation: that the spirit of freedom, which in former times has produced so much public virtue, will render France a bright example, to the surrounding nations, of wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and fidelity.

I hope I shall have the pleasure of your company this winter, in the large mansion we both love, as bearing the stamp and image of our lost friends.

You must be gratified by Dr Heathcote's grateful and tender memory of the excellent wife he has lost, your beloved sister; by his speaking of her on all occasions. I would have every body thus preserve the ideal presence of the friends they have lost.

Pray present my grateful respects to this good and ingenious man, whose partiality so highly flatters me;—but I can get no time for publications of any sort;—and as to the strictures upon Johnson's envious, sophistical, dazzling, and misleading work, "The Lives of the Poets," I should despair of curing the poison they have given to public taste. A few individuals only have strength of mind sufficient to resist the powers of his wit, that wither, upon common and half ingenious minds, all respect for genius, all sensibility of its emanations.

I have read many able strictures upon separate lives in that work, which carried conviction of the despot's injustice in every line; one above all excellent, where many were good, by Mr FitzThomas, laying bare his injustice to the immortal Gray—but they all passed away unnoticed by an

ungrateful nation, which ought to have distinguished and honoured those who rescue her noblest ornaments from the contempt thrown upon them by one who bore no brother near the throne of genius. Adieu! Yours.

LETTER XVI.

Miss Williams.

Colton, Dec. 12, 1790.

There is much for which I am to thank you, a kind letter of last spring unanswered, because your journey to the continent was so soon to succeed; and, since your return, a charming pamphlet, that shews me the sunny-side of the French Revolution. Right glad am I to see it. "Darkness, clouds, and shadows" have rested upon its surface—assiduously thrown by national envy, and deepened into a chaotic night by the able pen of Mr Burke—as I am told, for I have not yet read that celebrated pamphlet, except newspaper extracts.

France is certainly in a perilous situation. Devoutly do I wish that she may escape those

evils of anarchy which ill-omened eloquence would persuade us are inevitable.

This publication of Mr Burke's, by what I can learn of it, seems the twin-brother of Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny;"—the same apparent strength of reasoning, the same splendour of style. I hope time will prove the predictions of this statesman groundless, as it has already proved that of the literary and moral despot. Heaven forbid it should produce equal mischief. His boasted code of pure morality will never, by all the good it has done, or may yet produce, balance to his country the evils to which he was accessary, by vindicating the absurd and ruinous attempt to conquer America. Fatal was his eloquence, which "could make the worse appear the better reason."

Believe me, dear Helen, I take the most lively interest in every sentence of your charming little book. My heart is in unison with its generous and eloquent apostrophes to the, I hope, rising state; but great must be its difficulties, imminent its dangers.

What misfortunes, what woes have been the lot of your friends! We can hardly conceive that the parental heart was capable of such infernal induration. The present felicity of the injured pair must, from recollection of their past suffer-

ings, acquire a degree of sweetness and poignance which cannot be connected with ordinary happiness, and with the former experience of common calamities.

Your last summer's sun was brightened by the cheering influence of that blessing upon surrounding multitudes, which, the song says, can alone give it fresh beauty. To me its most gilded days were sicklied over by the shades of grief and disease. Each are, in some degree, pervaded, but the latter are not passed away. Adieu.

LETTER XVII.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY.

Dec. 19, 1790.

YOU will wonder when I tell you that as yet I have read only in extracts, that publication upon which the eye of all Europe is bent. Accident, and not want of inclination, has occasioned this abstinence. I shall have it next week, and I mean to read and consider it with the most impartial eye. That splendid Quixotism about the Queen of France, displayed in the newspapers,

did not please me at all. Unbiassed as I profess myself as to my reason, Mr Burke will find difficulty to convince me, that the oppressive and barbarous monarchy of France ought to have subsisted; and I feel inclined to hope, from Helen William's interesting epistolary pamphlet, that the clouds, with which his imagination seeks to eclipse the sun of liberty, have either no real existence, or that the fervour of its beams will disperse them.

I am glad dear Mrs Whalley is so well recovered from that dreadful accident; and that the temper and disposition of him to whom your darling niece has given herself, is so amiable. I know, from sad experience, how important the circumstance to your peace and comfort.

Your last arrived in my absence, and followed me to Colton, about ten miles from Lichfield, the lately purchased seat of Mr and Mrs B., a young couple from the West Indies. He seems quite a West Indian, gay, thoughtless, impetuous, good-natured, and of a princely spirit; but uxoriously, and with the most jealous tenacity, attached to his very beautiful wife. Mrs B. is indeed the most perfect beauty I ever beheld. Her height, her symmetry, her lovely features, her dark hair and eyes, her complexion delicate, but without bloom, and the pensive dignity of her air, rather foreign

than English, entirely realize Richardson's description of Clementina. I look at her, and fancy myself in the palace of Poretta. The time is to come, if ever the time come, when I shall see a Clarissa, except in my mind's eye, where an image of her sits enthroned in matchless grace, and super-human beauty.

Giovanni and his daughter were with me upon this visit, the former most, the latter all of the time. Mrs B. was a scholar of Piozzi's, and sings with great taste, and perfectly in tune, though her voice is weak. Their charming songs inspirited our evenings. Lady Cresley, who desires her compliments, often inquires after you and Mrs W. with much regard. She is just come to her new house in the Close—to my great joy; for I have been pained to see her and her charming daughters so long in lodgings, so unworthy of them. Great was the compliment they paid Lichfield in abiding them so patiently while they waited for this; agreeable to them in every thing, except the annual two months abdication, when the canon, their landlord, resides in it with his family.

Since I finished the last sentence, I have read the Burke—and am, however reluctantly, convinced that the boasted liberty of France is de-

generating into coercive anarchy, not likely to end well.

Most kind is your charming friend Mrs Jackson's mention of me.—Assure her of my gratitude, and assure yourself that I am always yours affectionately.

LETTER XVIII.

MRS TAYLOR.

Jan. 10, 1791.

I AM glad to see you approve my vindication of Pope's writings and character. You find my antagonist still flounces and struggles, though fairly thrown down; and while he vainly endeavours to get up again, is crying out amain, "I am victorious."

Having declared previously that I would not pursue the subject farther, I am not at all tempted, by this impotent defence, to fight the battle over again, and re-slay the already slain. Mr Weston has proved nothing but his own preference of vulgar to elegant diction; for it is not about superiority of genius in the two illustrious

writers that I contend, but about their style. Every person of common sense will acquit me for omitting fine lines of Dryden, since I have often owned, in the course of the controversy, that his works abound with them. My business was to confute Mr Weston's assertion, that what is called his worst writing, " was only simple, and never vulgar; and that the poems, in general, were the better, and not the worse for those lines, which, as he says, ' enervated and debauched taste might call bald and meagre."

To my having said that the couplet in Virgil, put into the mouth of the Empress of Heaven, was wretchedly below her dignity, and the general tenor of heroic verse:

> " Shall angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
> The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?"

and adding, that it was easy to have expressed the sense without inelegance, viz.

> " Shall angry Pallas, with avenging aim,
> O'erwhelm the Greeks, and wrap their fleets in flame?
> And shall not I," &c.

he replied, " that they who are pleased with Dr Harewood's translation of an expression in the New Testament, who, disapproving the beautiful

simplicity of " Jesus wept," altered it to " Jesus burst into a flood of tears," will, of course, approve Miss Seward's alteration.

It is in vain to argue with a man absurd enough to make the comparison ; there is nothing vulgar in the concise and pathetic expression, " Jesus wept ;" while, in the frittered alteration, the word *burst* is vulgar. My translation is as concise as Dryden's ; equally expresses the sense, but without those low common-life phrases which he uses, and which ill become the personage who is made to utter them. It is not the words *burn, drown,* and *men,* as I proved, when I cited them, that are in themselves vulgar; but, from the manner in which they are used, they become ludicrously mean.

Enough of this positive genius, Mr Weston, who triumphs after a defeat as for a victory, and who is applauded for his bad taste by his coadjutor, Mr Morfit, in verse and prose, and under various signatures

Are you not sorry for the ruinous intemperance with which France has pursued an object in itself noble ?

> " Thus has the rabble, in its headlong rage,
> Order transformed to anarchy and spoil."

I read Miss Williams's interesting little publica

tion before I read Burke; and my whole heart and soul had, previous to the appearance of either, exulted in the idea of a great nation liberated from an oppressive yoke. Miss Williams showed me the sunny-side of the prospect, and I gazed with a willing eye. I took up Mr Burke's pamphlet, assured that I should detest it; yet, as I never allow my reason to be wholly blinded by my wishes, I could not resist his statement of facts, nor his luminous reasoning upon them. They shew me the national assembly as a band of hot-brained enthusiasts, who are ruining their country, under the pretence of delivering it. I see that discipline, and reasonable compliance with the exigences of the state, are fallen with the wreck of subordination, never, in all probability, to rise again—but I still dislike Mr Burke's Quixotism about the Queen of France, and his vindication of hereditary honours. They are much more likely to make a man repose, with slumbering virtue upon *them*, for the distinction he is to receive in society, than to inspire the effort of rendering himself worthy of them. They are to men what beauty is to women, a dangerous gift, which has a natural tendency to make them indolent, silly, and worthless. Let property be hereditary, but let titular honours be the reward of noble or use-

ful exertions. France, in her folly, has destroyed them totally, instead of making them conditional. Adieu.

LETTER XIX.

Rev. Dr Warner, at Paris.

March 2, 1791.

My dear Sir,—Give me leave to recommend to your attention my friends, Mr and Mrs Burt, a gentleman and lady of fortune and elegant manners—and their friend and companion, Mrs Smith, an amiable young woman, and very dear to me—the daughter of Mr Saville, and a great favourite of your friend, the illustrious Mr ——, who wished her company on his travels, as preceptress to little Alphonso; but the absence of a wife made the scheme more pleasant than prudent. Mrs Burt, educated in a convent, speaks French with fluency.

I am sorry you have lost your agreeable and good friend Mr Selwyn—though he fell ripe fruit into the lap of the universal mother;—but

we never think it time to lose those we love. I hope he has continued his friendship beyond the grave. His memory will sink in my esteem, if you are forgotten in his will.

We mourn the death of those who are dear to us; but, if not so grieving, it is more mortifying when friendship, voluntarily and ardently offered, long maintained with the most gratifying attention, and not forfeited by any fault of our own, finds a living tomb in the inconstancy of the human heart.

It has been said that men, though prone to fickleness in their loves, are in their friendships steadier than our sex. I have not found it so. —Mr ———, after his often plighted amity, thinks it too much, thinly to cover a single half-sheet twice in a year. To that he had, for a considerable time, reduced his once frequent letters. It is now twenty months since I heard from him.

My friends purpose staying a few weeks in Paris. I hope you will visit them, and point out the objects in Paris most worth their attention. They mean to proceed through Switzerland to Italy—but I trust they will not encounter Italian suns in the summer.

I say nothing to you of French politics. The

cause of freedom has had, and still possesses my best wishes; but Mr Burke has taught me to fear for that nation the mischiefs of anarchy. Adieu!

LETTER XX.

Miss Powys.

Mansfield Woodhouse, May 13, 1791.

My dear friend,—I do most truly sympathize with you in the anxiety and concern which must esult from Miss S——'s situation. Her appearance, when I had the pleasure to pass a few fleeting but valued hours in your society last month, gave flattering hopes of decreasing complaints. They have deceived us;—however, when afflictions come, it is at once natural and wise, to draw comfort from reflecting, that they might have visited us at times, and under circumstances, which must have augmented their power to distress.

I came hither on Sunday night, to the embowered mansion of Mrs Mompessan, one of the oldest of my friends. She is many years my senior, and, beginning to love me in the giddy, romantic, hoping, happy years of my teens, has never dash-

ed the overflowing cup of her kindness with the bitterness of neglect. She was ever a singular but excellent being, uniting the exertion and spirit of the male character, with the melting softness and sympathy of the female heart, when it is most artless and amiable. Her mind has not lost an atom of its candour and generous warmth, beneath all the wear and tear of the feelings, or from the generally benumbing power of years that have past their meridian. Her family is ancient and respectable; her fortune scarcely reaching 200l. per annum, which is her share, with two sisters, in the estate of their ancestors. She has lived upon it, farming, cultivating, and improving it, since she was eighteen years old, her parents dying before that period. By her industry, attention, and taste, she has made a little Eden of a spot which had little original beauty, and from whence prospect is excluded. Far, however, from limiting herself always to the Abbyssinian scene she had raised, her acquaintance and connections have been extended, her excursions frequent, nor confined to this kingdom. She has friends in Switzerland whom she has twice visited. She once resided there two years, on the banks of the celebrated Lake of Geneva, at Lausanne and Vevay, surrounded by the scenes which Rousseau has immortalized. The strength

of understanding and simplicity of manners in the Swiss gentry charmed her, from their congeniality to her own cast of character. Some years after, she twice, at different times, travelled through France and Germany, with a favourite nephew, Mr Heathcote, since made envoy from our court to some of the German ones. Mrs Mompessan increased her nephew's consequence by her talents, her animated and polite manners, in several of the German courts where they sojourned.

When in England, she used often to be a guest in our family. Confined as I was through my life with invalid parents, it was, till now, only once, and that in my twentieth year, soon after the death of my sister, that I visited her lovely bowers. The morning after my arrival bloomed with all the orient hues of May. I rose early, and walked alone around the pleasure-ground, shedding tears of joy as I rambled contemplating its beauty and extent, and from observing the growth of her plantations, the yet more graceful disposition of her smooth and verdant lawns, her winding shrubberies, and crystal waters, after a lapse of so many years. Nor less am I charmed with the patriarchal simplicity of her ancient mansion, her flocks, and herds, and honest labourers, and with the rare union of scenic beauty and

intellectual resources, with all the *reality* of pastoral exertion, and with that animated cheerfulness which diffuses its sunshine around her. My dear friend, there are not many such women. It is almost needless to say she never married; but, her pension considered, it is to the credit of the men to observe, that she rejected, in her youth, many advantageous offers of that sort.

I write to you from a pleasant, though low-roofed dressing-room, whose uneven floor is covered with a very beautiful carpet of natural flowers, shaded in cross-stitch by the fingers of this ever-busy Arachne. It is surrounded by book-cases, filled with an admirable collection of history, travels, memoirs, moral philosophy, divinity, and the works of our best poets—but the exhaustless stores of my friend's cultivated mind are a living library, to which it is yet pleasanter to resort. Her knowledge of history, ancient and modern, the chronologic exactness of her memory, and a fund of anecdotes, make her a most delightful and interesting companion; especially from the animated manner in which she communicates her intellectual stores. Never are they obtruded, nor ostentatiously pursued, but applied, in the most natural manner, to the conversation of the moment.

This rural apartment is consigned to me, where

I pass my mornings, and where Mrs M. declares herself my visitor. It looks upon her lawny walks, and breathes the very spirit of peace and pleasantness. You would be happy here;—you, to whom friendship, books, and the charms of nature are all-in-all sufficient. Adieu!

LETTER XXI.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

Mansfield Woodhouse, May 15, 1791.

You instance my obligations to you, Sir, by the kind interest you take in my health, and in the distinctions which, with all a friend's partiality, you desire my muse should receive.

I own the neglect of the Royal Society, in the disposition of the medals struck in honour of Captain Cook, hurt me; especially as the president, Sir Joseph Banks, is my acquaintance. Though I confess my chagrin, yet it finds ample compensation in the generous indignation with which you reprobate his preference of those who direct their attention to the moths, butterflies, and curry-combs of that voyage, to her who attempt-

ed to sing the purposes, the exploits, and the virtues of its commander.

It is curious that your bounty to me enabled Mr Green to display, in his museum, those Otaheitean curiosities, whose exhibition obtained him a medal. I presented him with a part of your present, and was doubly glad that I had done so, when I found his displaying them rewarded by a distinction which cheered and delighted his honest benevolent heart. If there is ought of estimable in my composition, it consists in an utter exemption from envy, which even my enemies confess; yet, being an hereditary exemption, it proves my happiness, rather than my virtue.

I had not turned an unobserving eye upon the poetic merit of the Ode on St David's Day. Without suspecting it to have been written by a friend, its spirit, the grace of its imagery, and the music of its numbers, had attracted my attention. Nothing is pleasanter than to find the source of a composition, which had pleased us, in the talents of one we esteem.

You have an excellent heart; every thing proves it.—You are alive to friendship; you see every little merit in others in the brightening light of your own benevolence; and the love of your native country glows in your bosom. I am glad to find that Spain will be obliged to yield her palm

of primal discovery in the western world to ancient Britain.

I hope, at last, there will be no war with Russia; that Mr Pitt's brain will not become incurably diseased by the manie militaire. Why should we augment the ruinous weight of our immense national debt, and grind the faces of the poor with taxes in endless accumulation, beneath a visionary dread lest the balance of power should be lost in Europe?

You are very good to be solicitous for my health. It seems to renovate very much beneath the fresh and balmy gales that blow around this beautiful retreat of friendship, and the sylvan graces. Nothing can be more to my taste than such a retirement, and few things more my wish than that you should believe me your ever-obliged friend.

LETTER XXII.

HUMPHRY REPTON, ESQ.

Mansfield Woodhouse, June 1, 1791.

I SEEM here to be in a domain of yours, since everywhere I go you are mentioned. As for Major Rooke, he speaks of you con amore. What charming urbanity in his voice, his look, his address! I see him, I listen to him with reverence and love. Yesterday we dined in his Juan Fernandez seclusion. It is infinitely to my taste. Bolder and more magnificent scenery may excite my *admiration*;—but they are the simple graces of retreats like these that I *delight* in contemplating: glades and lawny walks, not beyond the reach of my humble fortune, should I be induced to quit Lichfield, the home of my youth, for a still more rural retirement, as life declines.

Mrs Mompessan, whose guest I now am, has sylvan taste and industry. In early youth, she became mistress of this, the estate of her ancestors, who certainly dreamt of nothing less than scenic beauty. She found massy stone walls dividing trim gardens;—a straight brook and crowded

orchards. Her fruit-trees remain; at least so many of them as unite the useful with the lovely; but they stand separate on little verdant lawns, and on the banks of crystal waters, in which alders and willows dip their long arms. In the place of those ponderous and gloomy walls, she has winding shrubberies; and where flowers were ranged, in "curious knots," and box-borders, we rove amid thickets of roses, lilachs, and woodbines. Instead of arbours, that looked like green wigs, we sit at noon in root-houses, and in the rocky hermitage. The window, from whence I write to you, overlooks the green smooth glades, where laburnums hang their golden curtains amongst the fruit-trees.

You teach me to be proud of my life-long aversion to naked waters. I never loved the Trent in Staffordshire, because its banks are bald. When Hotspur and Glendower are making division of the lands they expected to share in right of imaginary conquest, the former says,

"And here the smug and silver Trent doth run."

The first epithet, so appropriate, shews that Shakespeare had been in Staffordshire, and observed the tressless banks of that stream The

rivers of my native mountains, the Derwent and the Wye, are beautifully fringed.

I have no constitutional ambition of acquaintance with the great—but Sir B. Boothby's description of the Duke and Duchess of Portland always made me wish I had possessed the honour and happiness of being known to them. That desire has increased beneath the warmth of your encomiums on their engaging manners. Since I came to Woodhouse, it has amounted almost to longing—that I might try to engage their farther favour and protection for the finest young man I almost ever beheld, Mr William Otter, whose family have already experienced the generous kindness of his Grace—but this accomplished youth is at present wholly unprovided for. His gentle virtues, his classic learning, which has already obtained the notice of Cambridge University, and his uncommon eloquence in the pulpit, will reflect honour upon the patrons who shall place him where these fine qualities shall be distinguished and rewarded. I heard him preach last Sunday, and I never heard divine and moral truths adorned with more strength of reasoning, more pathos, more striking imagery, more beautiful language, delivered in the most persuasive and harmonious tones, and with the most energetic

and glowing grace. You are benevolent, and have the Duke's ear. I wish you would try to animate his attention and friendship towards a rising genius, so worthy to be distinguished by the most amiable nobleman of the age. What a vile name is Otter for such a youth!—but, as Juliet says, what's in a name?

I enter entirely into your ideas about providing a graceful home for the Naiads at Sir John Reus's in future years. Your four lines of prophetic verse, on the hereafter fate of your plantations there, are charming.

Adieu! Do not forget to complete the little sketch of my darling valley, in some hour of leisure, if such an hour should ever come to you, who have been long one of the most ingenious, and who are now the busiest of human beings.

LETTER XXIII.

Mrs Mompessan.

Lichfield, June 14, 1791.

Did I not manage my mind right stoically, not to touch upon any thing in the shape of an adieu? Was it not, camelion-like, to take the colour of your inclinations, who, I know, love to reserve your embraces for the hour of meeting? Never can I forget how warm those embraces were, when, in the dusk of a vernal evening, I entered your mansion, so embowered and so pleasant, after an absence of almost countless years. Never can I forget the month that glided so swiftly away amid your lovely glades, and in your thrice-dear society. Once more let me thank you for the sweetness and lustre of those recorded days.

As to the sultry morning of our separation, I have not, through life, been so sensible of climatic violence. The white and cloudless concave smote upon us with fiery severity, and clouds of choking dust rose incessantly around us.

But Mrs Hayley received me with animated gladness, encompassed with youths of genius—the

rising hopes of Derby. They walked with us into Mr H.'s garden, and returned home with us to supper. Next morning we had levees in succession; half the smart people of that town, interspersed with the militia officers. We past the afternoon and evening at Dr Darwin's, though he, who unites in himself what Johnson said of James and Garrick, viz. "he who lengthened, and he who gladdened life," the great physician and exquisite poet, was called thirty miles another way, in the exercise of his first power. Mrs Darwin had an immense party to meet us, for whose apprehended amusement she engaged me, by earnest solicitations, to repeat odes and sonnets. If they were not egregious flatterers, the pleasure the company expressed, made it impossible to grudge the exertion, even beneath a sky so torrid.

The next morning we paid some of our visits; and in the evening Mrs Hayley had more than twenty friends to tea and supper: amongst them a gentleman who, on the instant of his being introduced, impressed my mind with a sentiment in his favour, more passionately tender than I had ever felt for any man on the first interview,

"Even in the heyday of impetuous youth,
The spring of life, the bloom of gaudy year."

It was so tender as to force the tears in rivers down my cheeks, during the first half hour in which he talked to me.

And now, lest your rigid decorum should induce you to censure, without mercy, emotions, at once so rapid and ungovernable, I must whisper to you the age of their inspirer; he is ninety-one—my father's old friend, Mr Ashby, who preserves, at so late a period, his intellects and sensibility in wonderful power, and with the most attentive politeness; but the sunk mouth of extreme old age, the glazed eye, the hesitating feebleness of accent, the cold clammy hand that pressed mine with affectionate earnestness, all contributed to produce a resemblance to my poor father, so striking as to occasion those emotions I mentioned. He inquired after generations at Lichfield, long passed away, who were his contemporaries, and with whose names my mother had, in childhood, familiarized me, though they had then ceased to exist. He told me that he had often had my mother on his knee, the most beautiful infant of three years old, he said, he ever beheld.

You will imagine how interesting all this to me, who look back upon the years that are fled with all the enthusiasm, though not with the science of an antiquarian; yet, however interest-

ed, gratified, and amused, by the politeness, vivacity, and intelligence of the Derby gentlemen and ladies, I found the heats dreadfully oppressive. Mrs Hayley's tea-room, and the bed-chamber I occupied, are full west. Accustomed to slumber amidst the profoundest silence, and unable, through the sultriness, to shut down my sashes, the street-noises, excessive and incessant, kept me awake two whole nights. I felt the torture of being startled into wakefulness every time the balmy power weighed down my eye-lids, and thought of the denunciation against Macbeth. I was never more sensible of its force, and of the misery of being forbid to taste the "chief nourishment at life's feast,"

> "Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
> The death of each day's woe, sore labour's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds!"

The stock of health I had acquired in your peaceful village began to vanish fast beneath such fatigue. I sighed for the cool book-room—the hermitage—the shaded lawns, and gurgling waters of Woodhouse.

It was with the utmost difficulty that I could retain my purpose of going to Burton, so pressing were the solicitations, on all hands, to

prolong my stay in a town whose inhabitants had proved so long pleasant to me—but I did keep my appointment with my friend Mrs Dalrymple, and arrived at Burton by nine in the evening. Four days passed agreeably away in that visit, except that, during one of them, Mrs D. was seized with a violent stomach and bowel complaint, but it went off the next day, and I had the satisfaction of leaving her perfectly recovered. It was then that I could jestingly tell her she fell ill on purpose to show off her husband's tender attention, more animated and incessant than I had ever observed in the creation's lords to sick wives. So she sent me home half inclined to bewail my virginity, like Jephtha's daughter.

This good couple long to be acquainted with you, and you would like them. She has intelligence, cheerfulness, and droll humour, in which you so much delight—he has sense, worth, and character, resulting from pleasant oddity and shrewd simplicity of accent and language. You would like him some degrees superadded to your esteem for his good qualities, when you shall know that he lost an estate of 1500l. per annum, by his uncle Colonel Dalrymple's attachment to the fallen house of Stuart, in the year 1745. Mr and Mrs D. wish you to pass a day or two

with them in some of your journies through Burton, and I wish you would so far oblige and indulge them.

I came home late on Sunday night, and the next morning found the cathedral bowers and lawns in full bloom and beauty, with the addition of four more houses round the area being white-roughcast. It is now completely the milky-way, a white zone round the verdant lawn sweetly contrasting the lavish foliage of the scene.

As yet I have seen few of its inhabitants, except dear Lady Gresley and her engaging daughters, and old Mr Green, to whom I made a point of carrying your good wishes yesterday. That benevolent and industrious collector of antique curiosities breaks fast:

"His lamp of life is almost spent and done."

Lichfield, or rather the strangers who visit her, will have a great loss if his museum should not survive him, or not be shewn *con amore*, when he shall no longer be found amidst the vestiges of former days. Your kind message cheered his drooping spirits, and he blessed you with moist eyes.

You remember my observing to you how much our language had become, even in common con-

versation, Latinized, since Dr Johnson's writings were familiar to people, and since his fine style had been so generally adopted by ingenious writers. I heard some ladies at Burton, who neither have, nor pretend to bookish knowledge, use the following words with prompt spontaneity in conversing on common topics, viz. "literature, literary, hilarity, stipulate, excruciating, delusive, juvenile, temerity, contemporary, phenomenon, popular, conservatory," &c. &c. Twenty years ago, scarce one of those words would have been understood, much less used by the generality of private gentlewomen. I like this growing Latinity—it rids us of a number of those hissing *s*'s that deform our language, which becomes more harmonious and full for their dismission. Adieu, my dear friend!

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs Knowles.

May 19, 1791.

My dear Mrs K.'s kind letter, and obliging present of the pretty work-basket, arrived a few days after I had taken wing for Nottinghamshire.

The box which contained it remained at home unopened during my five weeks' absence. Thus you perceive my will had nothing to do with this apparent tardiness of acknowledgment. You will now accept my thanks for its contents, so variously ingenious; though I must say our botanical friend, Saville's, share in the donation is not very flattering to him. The efflorescence of your pencil round that symbol of imputed idiotism, is beautiful. I will not flatter your muse with being equally happy. For the sovereign contempt of this fashionable science, which your tablet expresses, I think her adoring votary could, with a little of my versifying help, be thoroughly even with you. The very absurdest "folly of the wise*," that ever crept into an enlightened and comprehensive mind, is somewhat more open to ridicule than

"The nymphs and the swains who, with small pocket glasses,
Spend so much of their time in examining grasses."

We could have quite as good a laugh at magnetic eyes, that peep at watches through deal-boards, and squint at livers and lights through the fat paunches of aldermen.

* Animal magnetism.—S.

So Mr Boswell's life of Johnson is out at last; and its quantity of writing makes one wonder at his industry, after the world has complained so long of his idleness. As yet I have got only about the middle of the first volume;—the second I have not even seen; but I hear it contains the memorable conversation at Dilly's, but without that part of it of which I made minutes, and in which you appear to so much advantage over the imperious and gloomy Intolerant. This omission is surely unjustifiable, as I gave Mr Boswell my memoir, and as I am sure, though it by no means contained all that was said, it contains nothing but what was said by you and by the despot. Mr B. might have given as much more as you and he could recollect, but he should not have omitted those highly characteristic sentences. The little esteem, bordering upon contempt, which Boswell makes Johnson express for Mrs Thrale, in the zenith of his intimacy with her, proves him insincere, when it is compared with those glowing professions of veneration for her talents and virtues, which Johnson's letters to her so lavishly contain;—but he had no real sincerity, notwithstanding all his parade about veracity. His truth was always straining at gnats, and swallowing camels. Mr Boswell asserts its dignity in vain, while he gives such a proof of his falsehood

and flattering duplicity. This work is, however, on the whole, infinitely entertaining.

You inquire after my opinions on the momentous event, which draws to itself the anxious eyes of all Europe. Mine did not coldly behold a great nation emancipating itself from a tyrannous government—but I soon began to apprehend that its deliverers were pushing the levelling principle into extremes more fatal to civilized liberty than even an arbitrary monarchy, with all its train of evils. I read H. Williams's interesting letters from France. They do not attempt to reason, they only paint, and shew the illumined side of the prospect. My own enthusiasm, which apprehension had damped, rekindled beneath the glow of her feelings and imagination—but not into a firm dependence that France possessed a band of leaders, sufficiently exempted from selfish ambition, to promote the success and felicity of a new and hazardous experiment; in which all the links were broken in that great chain of subordination which binds to each other the various orders of existence.

Mr Burke's book then came before me—and though I read, with contempt, his nonsensical Quixotism about the Queen of France—though I saw, with indignation, the apostate whig labour-

ing to overturn the principles which produced the Revolution, and to prove a king of England's right to reign in despite of the wills of his subjects, yet I saw also a system of order and polity, elucidated and rendered interesting by every appeal to the affections of the human bosom; and it appeared to me more consonant to human nature, as it *is*, and less injurious to the public safety, than the levelling extreme into which France has rushed. Depending that the persuasive orator would not dare to misrepresent facts, I thought there was every thing to fear for France, and much to detest in her coercive circulation of the assignats, and in the wantonly tyrannous restraints she laid upon her monarch.

Sir Brooke Boothby's ingenious and eloquent reply to Burke, was the first answer I perused. It was with pleasure that I saw him clearly refuting his opponent's asserted legality of our King's claim to the crown, independent of the suffrages of his people; but it left my apprehensions of Gallic danger in full force. Not denying the truth of the circumstances by which Burke seems to prove that danger, Sir Brooke appears to admit its existence.

As to the anti-sophist, Priestley, I dislike his disingenuous manœuvrings about Christianity too

much to respect his opinions on any subject, so I did not read his reply to Burke.

But I read Payne's last work—and saw him divest the oratoric renegade of all pretensions to candour and fair statement, by proving that he had misrepresented some facts, and kept back others with all the finesse of a courtly politician.

I read in Payne that declaration of the rights of man, upon which a perfect code of laws, and a perfect form of government might be established, if human nature was disinterested, wise, and virtuous. Not being any of these things, but the reverse of them all, I do not believe those who have obtained power in France will respect its maxims enough to govern themselves by them;—enough to prevent the people from repenting that they fled from the throne to petty tyrants. This author's style is not elegant, or at all possesses equal force with his matter—yet, at intervals, he shows that he can command a fine one.

The Lessons to a Young Prince are amongst the finest and most spirited compositions of the age. Their style is perfect. It has all the beauty and animation of Burke's, with more perspicuity. Their author is a miracle, a political writer without party-prejudice. My opinions almost always met his as I read—particularly when

he traces to its source the king's popularity, viz the dread of seeing a needy, rapacious, and unprincipled faction govern the nation, with a more oppressive hand than our present rulers. One of them has pulled off his masque of patriotism to get into power by the king's favour; and the rest would follow his example, could they first get power.

I admire the French for taking the privilege of making war with other nations out of the hands of kings and ministers. I wish it was so here—but surely they have violated justice most tyrannically by their invasion of property, and the confiscation of hereditary estates. As to the church-lands, their being reduced into moderation, is well—I wish that also was so here. Yet, upon the whole, I am inclined to fear, that more diffusive misery and national inconsequence will be the result of that extreme to which they are pushing the levelling principle, than from the system, bad as it was, which they have destroyed... After all, I think modestly, and with no pretence to decision. Though the French Revolution is at present too big with danger to admit a desire, in any real well-wisher to this country, that she should consider it as her model;—yet I wish the French may prove a pattern, hereafter, of public virtue and public happiness, to the whole world.

Politics never engrossed much of my attention, convinced—

> " In every government, though terrors reign,
> Though tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,
> How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws, or kings, can cause or cure."

Adieu.

LETTER XXV.

REV. WILLIAM FITZTHOMAS.

Lichfield, June 5, 1791.

DEAR Sir,—Though my treacherous memory has lost the traces of our transient interview in the spring 1766, of which you remind me, it is yet pleasing to consider you as a very old acquaintance, and to know that I first conversed with you in the dawn of five golden years, in which this miserable world, as the croakers call it, was so interesting as to make me continually confess to myself, that I asked no other heaven than the duration of those circumstances which formed their charm.

As to politics, I do not think myself at all qualified to talk about them; to speak with any degree of certainty upon the event of that great, but hazardous experiment, which France is making to render mankind more independent of each other, more virtuous, and consequently more happy. Mr Burke is detected in the grossest misrepresentations concerning the state of that country. Time has already, in many respects, given the lie to his gloomy prognostics of its anarchy and ruin.

I, as well as yourself, have often thought it singular that Milton should have written so *con amore* of choral magnificence, and then that he should renounce it for the quiet dispassionate simplicity of unritual devotion. Must it not have been the triumph of principle and judgment over inclination, and the finer enthusiasm of taste? I mean *his* principles and his judgment, to which, great as he was, I am not inclined to decree infallibility. I think I have felt the salutary influence of church-music in strengthening devotion;—but I do not see that the demolition of cathedrals is necessarily connected with that system which transfers honour and power from blockheads of hereditary wealth and titular pomposity, to men of talents who shall exert them in the service of their country.

The idea of passing a few hours with you at Arrow, in my road to Mr Whalley's, is still cherished; but I cannot leave Lichfield till after the Bishop's visitation, fixed for the 19th of next month. The rosiery will not, I trust, have exhausted all its bloom and fragrance on the summer gales before I reach you. I shall be happy to find at your side the sweet blooming lad, whose dawn of talents and worth were so bright last summer. Yours, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

June 31, 1791.

WHEN is it that a feeling heart, alive to the graces of ingenious writing, can think such a letter too long as this which I have now the pleasure of acknowledging? Will you forgive me that it was not sooner acknowledged? The rapid day fleets from my purposes, and leaves me deploring the scanty number of its hours.

I left Woodhouse beneath the fervour of those skies which seemed to emulate the glow of tropic

suns; nor were the highly-flattering distinctions I received from the politeness of the gentlemen and ladies at Derby, where I paused four days, on a visit to my friend Mrs Hayley, entirely able to dispel that languor of spirits, always resulting to me from the summer ardours, when they are disposed to be extreme; but, thank Heaven, that seldom happens in our temperate climate.

Though I have neither strength of body or energy of mind to undertake perilous voyages, I can imagine what an exquisite feast for the imagination it must be to look back upon them, when they had produced such novel and curious exhibitions of scenery and manners as met your observation in the southern latitudes. Were you my neighbour I should like to hear you "discourse the wintry hours away" upon their description and anecdotes. Many must remain which have unavoidably escaped the recording pen;—and highly lucky should I have thought myself had I been in London, and invited, as you tell me I should have been, to partake those social repasts set apart for the voyagers of benevolence.

Yes, indeed, too just is your indignation that the son of their leader has no attention paid to his hereditary claims to distinction in our navy.

Your high praise and quotation from my ballad, "The Rocks of Lannow," flatters me very

sweetly. The more because the verse, whose images your feelings have found just, has been, by a certain would-be critic, called inferior to its two preceding ones, while I felt conscious that it is worth them both. Its marine picture was drawn from nature, and not from books. You tell me it is striking, and I know that it is original.

Eminently to the honour of Wales, and calculated to fan the flame of genius, is that patriotic institution which allots a silver medal to the best poem in its native language. But I am sorry to find that its poetic composition has such an absurd shackle. To make alliteration an indispensable duty, which is but an ornament, and ought never to be used with studied profuseness, is strange indeed. Your bards should combine to cast away such tyrannous fetters. Churchill has a couplet which happily enough ridicules all efforts to produce it:

> "But now, alas for me! who never pray'd
> For apt alliteration's artful aid!"

Neither should the poet take pains to avoid it, except the alliterating letter is an harsh one. In every ear, which suggests harmonious numbers, it has great spontaneity of growth. I have been

sometimes amused with the pedantic folly which asserts that it ought to be exploded, since we find it occasionally in all our beautiful versification, whether the lines be blank or chiming.

Accustomed to see you pleased with my writings, I venture to recommend to your attention two solemn sonnets of mine, which I have sent to Nichols for his Gentleman's Magazine, in return for a literary present he lately sent me. I hope his printers will not make nonsense of them by carelessness—but what has been may be. I think you will like them, because they were written from my heart—because their subjects come home to every bosom, and because their images are original.

Alas! for the royal fugitives of France! Generous impulse regrets that they are taken back to a situation so irksome and so perilous; but if they were to have returned, carrying fire and sword into the bosom of their country, to make it bleed in vain, or to rebuild the Bastile, and disperse lettres de cachet, it is preferring two to the million to mourn their recapture.

LETTER XXVII.

MISS WESTON.

July 7, 1791.

BUSY as I am, before my long excursion, that will so soon commence, yet I cannot resist an impulse to tell you, without delay, dear Sophia, how pleasing I find the hope of meeting you in Edwy's Eden. If all goes well, I shall be there about the 25th, happy to find you amid its bowers, or to expect you soon.

So, your brother is married at last, and your two families are to remain together. Sincerely and warmly do I wish that none of those evils, those jealousies of jarring interests may arise, which are so apt, where separate branches live beneath the same roof, to break and disunite the silver links of peace and concord.

As yet, I have read only the first volume of Boswell's Life of Johnson. What I foresaw has happened. That ingenuous pencil, which so well fulfilled the biographic duty, and painted the despot exactly as he was, when roaming the lonely Hebrides, has, at the impulse of terror, been ex-

changed for a more glowing one; and, in this work, almost every thing is kept back which could give umbrage to Johnson's idolaters, by justly displaying the darker, as well as fairer, sides of the medal. All, however, but his idolaters, must detest the ungrateful duplicity proved upon him, when we find him speaking with slight, bordering upon contempt, of the then Mrs Thrale, in the zenith of his intimacy with her. Mr Boswell was not aware, that impartiality would compare what he said of her with what he said to her. "To hear you," says he, in his letters to that lady, "is to hear wisdom; to see you is to see virtue." What despicable flattery was that, if he really believed the stores of her mind were trivial, and that she had no truth? while, if conscious that these imputations were unjust, his heart was at once thankless and malevolently false. Such, I confess, amidst all his gloomy piety, I always thought it. That conviction has not receded beneath the contempt of your charming friend, and of Mrs Montague, which his biographer has so indiscreetly, so impolitely recorded; nor beneath the lying assertion, that Gray was a dull fellow, and that there are but eight good lines in all his poetry. I hear Mason fares no better in the second volume. Dark and envious calumniator!

I both blame Mr Boswell, and wonder at him for the wanton, because unnecessary, inroads which a number of those records must make upon the feelings of many. But for them, his work had been of great value indeed. Entertaining, in the first degree, it certainly is; and, with the most commendable precision, exhibits the events of his life through all their series and changes. It contains a prodigious mass of colloquial wit and humour, which were certainly unrivalled. Let it, however, be remembered, that, to produce their eclipsing and resistless power, many things combined, which a wise and generous mind would not, for its own peace and health, consent to feel, even to possess that unequalled talent; viz. spleen, envy, boundless haughtiness, and utter callousness to all the mental sensibilities of others. I am of St Paul's mind, who says, where these things are, nor alms nor prayers constitute goodness.

" Say thou, whose thoughts at humble fame repine,
Shall Johnson's wit with Johnson's spleen be thine?"

Mr Burke's book has greatly fallen in my estimation, since the replies have proved upon it much misrepresentation and suppressed evidence—have hunted its arguments into all their artful recesses, and demonstrated their sophistry.

Time seems giving the lie more and more every day to the predicted mischiefs and ruin of the new constitution. I looked through the darkened telescope of Burke, and believed them inevitable; but, at present, the prophecy wears no likelihood of completion;—"the Ides of March are come." However, since they are not past, we must wait, without presumptuous decision, the event of this great experiment in politics. If it succeeds, crowns and nick-names, red ribbons and blue, will soon cease to excite the reverence of multitudes; but be cast aside over the earth, as the frivolous toys of empire, contemptible in themselves, and of a mischievous tendency.

My visit to Mrs Montpessan was many ways delightful to me. I know few who are so happy, or who live so rationally. She makes her day long, and fills it up variously and well. When we meet, I shall speak to you of the separate pleasures of that excursion, both at Mansfield, Derby, and Burton; receiving, as I did, the most kind and gratifying distinctions at all those places. My health, which had acquired great renovation in Nottinghamshire, drooped in that sultry weather; but I grew well again when the horizon clouded, and the winds blew.

Right glad am I, that our fair friend is well married; and question not that the mists of dis-

content will soon clear away from her mind. It is too well constituted to suffer regrets for a man, that could have married her and would not, to remain in its recesses, amid the caresses of a tender and obliging husband.

You ask me after your favourite Mrs ———. She has a warm, generous, good heart, and a very lively imagination; but it is apt to run into loquacious harpings on those particular ideas which, when conversing, happen to have taken the lead in her mind. The matter is generally good, but too redundant. Johnson once said to Boswell, "Sir, empty your head of Corsica." We should often make similar requests to Mrs ——, if one had not sensibility enough to prefer being wearied one's self, to mortifying a spirit so ardent and ingenuous.

If Helen Williams goes again to France, and for so long a time, it is probable she will be lost to her native country. Her graces will fire some patriot heart, with whom she will, in turn, be charmed.

Lady Gresley, with whom you are a great favourite, desires to return her compliments. I read to her several passages in your last. She was delighted with their lively eloquence. That which relates to the new Life of Johnson was one. "Ah! said she, I love Miss Weston for

being angry at the undue freedoms taken with her friend. I do not justify Mr Boswell on their account; but, on the whole, it is a fascinating composition, and I wish there were ten volumes of it instead of two."

Adieu.—Present my congratulatory compliments to your brother on his marriage; nor let me be forgotten to Mrs Weston. Heaven protect the peace, and comforts, and health of dear Sophia, prays her

A. SEWARD.

LETTER XXVIII.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY.

July 13, 1791.

IT is at last given me to fix the day on which I set out for your Eden. A literary friendship, and correspondence of some standing, with a Mr Fitzthomas, became personal last summer. Some years past, he published a very able and classical vindication of Gray's poetry, from the envious sneers of that despot, Johnson; but our tasteless, thankless age, which delights in the degradation

of genius, paid little attention to its defence, though so much was due. This gentleman has elegant manners, and is deservedly esteemed for the diffusion of his knowledge, and the benevolence of his heart. He was originally in the army; but, resenting the insolence of a superior officer by a challenge, and wounding, but not mortally, his antagonist, was obliged to quit the service, for a temerity, which, not practising, he had met contempt. Such is the senseless injustice produced by the clashing claims of honour and subordination.

On quitting the regiment, Mr F. took orders, and has since lived in lettered retirement, on the banks of the Arrow, rector of a village that bears the name of its river. I am told he has called around the fields and garden of his parsonage, the coy graces of secluded beauty.

Twice married, he is again, in middle life, a widower, with one child, a lovely youth of 15, whose mind is rich in paternal cultivation, and whose address is of hereditary elegance. My cousin, Mr White, accompanies me next Wednesday morning to the blooming bowers of my friend. I mean to pause beneath them on Thursday, and set out early enough on Friday morning to reach Bristol that night.

You are very good to think of meeting me there. If convenient, to be sure it would be very sweet, to anticipate, though even but by a few hours, the pleasures of your society.

Sophia writes to me, that she has thoughts of visiting Langford while I am your guest. If you can receive us both, without difficulty, her company would delightfully complete the renewal of those pleasures we tasted all together at Ludlow, in 1787.

I long to embrace dear Mrs Whalley, restored to us after that terrible accident, by which we were so near losing her eternally. Dangers escaped increase affection in the same degree that new instances of worth augment esteem.

What a charming description of your venerable friend, whose setting rays are so cloudless!

I hope to meet you with eyes, from whence the sanguine mists shall be dispersed, which hung about them when you wrote to me last. With that, and with every other desire for your and Mrs W.'s welfare, I bid you adieu, happy to think it will be a short one.

LETTER XXIX.

LADY GRESLEY.

Langford Cottage, July 30, 1791.

DEAR and revered Lady Gresley expressed a wish of hearing from me. I pay glad obedience to a request so flattering. Probably Mr White will have told your Ladyship how quiet we found the lately turbulent Birmingham, though the country round bore mournful traces of desolating fury. I led him over the lawn to Mosely, where my dear friend, Lady Carhampton, had set up her rest, after a life of filial persecutions. We viewed, with aching heart, the scorched and ruined remains of that spacious and elegant mansion, so late the abode of hospitality and cheerfulness, friendship, piety, charity, and peace. Alas! the flames had resounded in those pleasant apartments, and reduced them to a cluster of falling walls. With a face of woe, her gardener approached the chaise, and, in half-choked utterance, narrated the afflicting particulars: his Lady driven from her house, by a determined mob, who expressed a desire of not injuring her or hers, and

even helping to load the waggons she had procured to convey away her goods from a mansion they devoted to destruction, because her landlord was a presbyterian. Dreadful bigotry! by which we see kindled afresh, those flames of intolerant hatred for difference in religious opinions, which have been so full of mischief through former ages. Lady Carhampton took refuge in a cottage at the gate of the lawn, till Sir Robert Lawley's coach arrived to convey her from the dire spectacle of persecuting flames, bursting through every window of her beloved habitation. "The thick drop serene," which had long quenched her sight, perhaps, in that moment, she thought a friendly curtain, drawn between her and an object so cruel; but Mrs Nutterville, the companion of all her exiles, and to whom Mosely was not less dear as an home, beheld that direful resplendence.

Mr White has perhaps informed you, that the mob threatened, with a similar fate, the splendid residence of Lord Beauchamp, because he voted for the repeal of the test act. Had not the military arrived in time, it had probably fallen.

Mr Fitzthomas's rural parsonage, at the foot of the hill on which stands the princely palace of Ragley, is prettily embosomed in circling glades and shrubberies, whose confines are laved by the

silent Arrow, of picturesque course, and with banks very beautifully sylvan. Mr F.'s passion for umbrageous retirement, has made him indulge the growth of his plantations beyond the bounds of comfort; so that, penetrating the recesses of his bowers, we are perpetually exposed to the fate of Absalom. But this is only in the interior scene. A pretty little lawn, half-mooned by the house and shrubberies, admits the near hill, so magnificently villaed.

Nothing was ever richer in woodland scenery than the surrounding country, or more friendly than our welcome to the rural parsonage. I delivered your Ladyship's obliging compliments to its owner, who respectfully returns them. His taste and abilities are too decided not to give inevitable value to the consciousness of being cordially remembered by Lady G.

We passed Thursday morning in examining the varied splendors of the prouder domain; but in such precincts, my admiration, however high-strung, has nothing interesting about it.

Mr W. setting out earlier on Friday morn, arrived at Tewksbury an hour before me. Perceiving him lean out of the inn window, watching my approach, I cried out to him from the chaise, in the words of Prince Henry's Ghost,

" False, fleeting, perjur'd Clarence,
That slew me in the field at Tewksbury!"

Probably to the no small amusement of a few street passengers.

These enthusiasms have been a source of unmixed delight to me; they have been always felt on approaching scenes dignified by any great event in the years long vanished, or that have been the abode of genius, or the subject of its songs. Many a vexation have they banished, many a gloom have they illuminated.

H. White has all this local glow of spirit, and it rendered him a thrice pleasant companion on my journey. Considering how we bustled about in this same town, peeping at the monuments, and all other vestiges of that battle, in which the red roses were blighted, torn up, and deluged in blood;—considering that we walked through the cathedral at Glocester, during choir-service in the afternoon, exulting in the superiority of our own, both as to architectural beauty and choral powers;—we did great things, by my reaching Bristol that night, and Mr Whalley's early the next morning.

At ten o'clock, Mr Whalley arrived in his chaise, to conduct me to his Eden, among the

Mendip mountains. Singularly, and beyond my high-raised expectations, beautiful I did indeed find it; situated, built, furnished, and adorned in the very spirit of poetic enthusiasm, and polished simplicity. It is about twelve years since Mr Whalley began to cover, with a profusion of trees and shrubs, one of these vast hills, then barren like its brethren. The plantations seem already to have attained their full size, strength, and exuberance of foliage.

By the addition of another horse, to help the chaise-horses, we ascended the sylvan steep. At about two-thirds of its height, on a narrow terrace, stands the dear white cottage, whose polished graces seem smilingly to deride its name, though breathing nothing heterogeneous to cottage simplicity. The first floor consists of a small hall, with a butler's pantry to the right, and good kitchen to the left; housekeeper's room beyond that; scullery behind the kitchen; the offices at a little distance, detached from the house, many steps below this bank, and screened from sight by trees. The second floor contains, in front, to the north-west, three lightsome, lovely, though not large, apartments, whose spacious sashes are of the gothic form. These are the dining-room, drawing-room, and elegant boudoir beyond, all

opening through each other. My apartment, from which I now write, is behind the boudoir; its window, at the end of the house, looking to the east, and upon a steep lawn, sprinkled over with larches, poplars, and woodbines, excluded, by a circular plantation from all prospect of that magnificent vale, upon which the front rooms look down, in instant and almost perpendicular descent. A gravel-walk winds up this secluded lawn to the mountain top. Mr and Mrs Whalley, and their other guests, sleep in the attics. The wide-extended vale beneath us has every possible scenic beauty, excepting only the meanders of a river. Scarce two hundred yards from the villa, on the left hand, a bare brown mountain intersects this its woody neighbour, and towers equal heights. The protection it extends from the north-west winds has been every thing to Mr Whalley, as to the growth and health of his plantations. Sloping its giant's foot to the valley, it finely contrasts, with barren sterility, the rich cultivation of the scenery below, and the lavish umbrage that curtains these steeps.

With the sort of sensation that a beauteous country girl, in the first glow of youth and health, surveys an antiquated dowager of rank and riches, seems this little villa to look down on the large stone mansion of Langford Court, the property

of Mr and Mrs Whalley, and their former residence. It stands in the valley, about half a mile from us, encircled by its fine lawn of two hundred acres, planted and adorned with great taste. Yet more immediately below us nestles, in a wood, the village of Langford. The smoke of its farms and cottages, curling amongst the trees at early morn, imparts the glow of vitality and cheerfulness to our romantic retirement. I climb, by seven o'clock in a morning, the highest terrace, and "drink the spirit of the mountain gale," which seems to invigorate my whole frame, and give my lungs the freest respiration. Never before did I breathe, for any continuance, an atmosphere so sublimated. The extensive vale finely breaks into inequalities by knolls and dingles. The beautiful fields wearing, from the late rains, the brightest verdure, have waved outlines of plenteous hedge-mose, and appear, by their depth from the eye, shining and smooth as the lawns of our nobility. They are interspersed with thick and dark, though not large, woods. The whole wide expanse is dotted over by white rough-cast cottages, and here and there a village-spire and squiral chateau.

Fifteen miles in width, and about seven distant from this elevation, the Bristol channel lies, a sheet of silver, stretched longitudinally over the

vale. Beyond, we plainly discern the Welch coast, whose mountains bound the horizon.

Mr Whalley's walks and bowers are finely diversified,

> " Shade above shade, a woody theatre."

The several terraces ascending over each other are connected by steep winding paths for the active, and by grassy steps for the feeble. These terraces are so variously planted and disposed, as to avoid all that sameness to which, from their situation, they were liable; now secluded and gloomy; now admitting the rich world below to burst upon the eye. Hermitages and caves, cut in the rocky steeps, contain rustic seats, dedicated to favourite friends, by poetic inscriptions.—One to Mrs Siddons; another to Miss Hannah More; another to the accomplished Mrs Jackson of Bath; one to Mr Whalley's venerable mother; another to Mr Inman, the excellent clergyman of this parish; one to Sophia Weston; and one to myself. These grottos relieve us perpetually by their seats amidst ascents so nearly perpendicular.

On the summit of this pendant garden we find a concave lawn, with a large root-house in the centre of that semicircular bank, whose thick curtains of firs, larches, poplars, &c. form a darkly verdant fringe, that, rising above the root-house,

crowns the mountain-top. This rustic pavilion, supported by pillars made of the boles of old trees, and twined round by woodbines and sweet-peas, is open in front, and commands the whole splendour of the vale below. It contains a large table, on which we lay our work, our writing, or our book, which we carry thither in a morning, whenever the weather will permit. Hitherto the skies have not shone upon us with much summer warmth and brightness.

I had the pleasure to find dear Mrs Whalley tolerably well, though feeling, at frequent intervals, severe memorials of her dreadful accident. She, Mr W., and myself, talk of your Ladyship and Miss Gresleys frequently, and always with the most lively interest.

Mr Whalley's mother is here, a miracle at eighty-five, of clear intellects, upright activity, and graceful manners: also Miss Davy, a fine young woman, related to Mrs Whalley; but charming Sophia is not here; the scanty number of these pretty bed-chambers forbids the accommodation of more than two or three friends at the utmost. I have some hopes of seeing her at Bath on Wednesday, whither we have been invited by Mrs Jackson, in a letter of never-excelled spirit, elegance, and kindness. She daily expects Miss Weston's arrival.

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My curiosity is on fire to view the drawing-room of Europe, as your Ladyship calls it, and to admire, with my actual sight, those graces which you have so often placed before my mind's-eye by very animated description.

Late Miss Caroline Ansley, married to a Mr Bosanquet, inhabits the Hall-house, Langford Court, and makes Mrs Whalley a social and pleasant neighbour. Her manners are obliging and ingenuous. She inquired much after Lady and Miss Gresleys, whom she said she had the pleasure of knowing very well; and yesterday the celebrated Miss Hannah More favoured me with a visit. I like her infinitely. Her conversation has all the strength and brilliance which her charming writings teach us to expect. Though it was our first interview, and no previous connection, correspondence, or even message, had passed between us, she met me with an extended hand, and all the kindness of old acquaintance.

I have wearied my fingers by the length of this letter, and fear a similar fate for your Ladyship's attention. Adieu! dearest Madam! Have the goodness to present my affectionate compliments in your domestic circle; and to believe me, with the highest esteem and attachment, your faithful, obliged, and obedient servant.

LETTER XXX.

Mrs Mompessan.

August 23, 1791.

I acknowledge the kindness of your last letter, my dear Mrs M., in the sweet retreat of my friend, Mr Whalley; from the paradise he has opened in the wild bosom of one of the vast Mendip mountains. They extend twenty miles in a chain, fronting the Bristol Channel, and there I am, beneath the roof of his cottage, which, in its white frock of rough-cast, clings near the summit of the steep ascent, with all its pines and laurels waving about it. Never was there a retirement at once so total and so gay;—total from its umbrageous seclusion—gay from the gorgeous vale it commands, over which the sea stretches one of her wide arms, and over whose intervening surface are spread, in luxuriant expanse,

"Hill, dale, and shady wood, and sunny plain."

A populous and social neighbourhood, allured

hither by the singular graces of the scene, and by the hospitality of its owners, leave us but little time to ourselves.

The week after I arrived here, Mr W. was so good as to take me to Bath. We were the guests of his charming friend, Mrs Jackson, a woman of first-rate abilities and virtues. You will imagine how much I must be pleased with the rare union of architectural magnificence with picturesque scenery, which renders that celebrated city unmatched in the world. The morning after my arrival there, I called upon Mrs and Miss Woodhouse; passing a rapid hour in their prized and interesting society, their look, their voice, restoring vanished years. I was delighted to see the majestic beauty of your niece in such nearly perfect preservation, after so long an interval; but time has laid his iron-hand upon your sister.

The terrific graces of the late *lurid* Monday were, I trust, less severe with you than in this country, where they have been considerably mischievous. Our high and rocky situation redoubled the loudness of those bursting thunders, and the many and large windows of this sylvan lanthorn admitted the full untempered blaze of the lightnings, that, during eight hours, glared incessantly through them.

You have shuddered over the bigot conflagrations of Warwickshire—and execrated the infamous seditious hand-bill that awakened the fury of the mob.

How much I think myself obliged by your assurances of constant welcome to the habitation I love at Mansfield Woodhouse, I want words to say. You will not surely go abroad again, nor disappoint my hope of your company at Lichfield during a part of next winter. Good Mr Green is, I hope, living still, and still amused with his museum, as I hear nothing to the contrary; but his health was very feeble and precarious, when I left home. Adieu!

LETTER XXXI.

MRS STOKES.

Lichfield, Dec. 10, 1791.

I SIGH over the fallen blossom that so lately bloomed in your vicinity, and sincerely commiserate poor Miss Dorothy Percy, weeping over her sister's grave.

The retired disposition of these amiable young women*, made them dislike the world and its gaieties, in their yet early youth. Their illegitimate birth, though from a sire so noble, has left the hapless Dorothea, beneath this irreparable loss, alone on our wide earth. No parent! no uncle! no aunt! no brother!—and now, alas, no sister!

I am surprsised at the stately and expensive funeral which ensued upon this decease. Had Miss Percy's birth been legal, the pageantry could not possibly have been more sumptuous. How busy over her insensate clay was the ostentation she hated!

> "Has death his fopperies?—then well may life
> Put on her plume, and in her jewels smile."

I am delighted with my god-daughter, the dear little Honora's recovery, and with the health which blesses you in your other blooming branches. Often do I reflect upon the interesting weeks I so lately passed with you in the bosom of your lively and lovely family.

* Natural daughters of the late Duke of Northumberland. They lived, at that period, at Kidderminster, under the guardianship of a widow lady.—*S.*

A late letter from Mr Whalley contains a delightful winter's landscape of his view from the rocky and lofty eminence on which stands his pine-sheltered villa. I cannot resist the temptation of transmitting it here.

"Our beloved cottage has still charms for us. Use cannot pall, nor custom stale its infinite variety. Elevated as we are, the south-west hurricanes pass innoxious over our heads, because we have plantations of evergreens, as you know, and terraces that rise above us to nearly the mountain's summit; and because the more lofty mountain, which intersects ours on the left, forms our sheltering screen. But those hurricanes rush with tenfold violence through the vale beneath us, while our comforts within are undamped by the rain, and unchilled by the frost. A thousand cottages, undescried in the leafy summer, now shew their white cheerful faces. The brook, which you called a *nothing*, and which, during the softer seasons, is, in truth, most shallow and simple, runs now expanded, and foams with turbulent pride at our feet; while the more distant moors, covered with water, perfectly resemble a majestic river, rolling between us and the sea."

Is not this a Salvatorial sketch?—I mean to leave it in full force upon your imagination, and

therefore shall not prolong my letter, except by kind remembrances to Dr S. and the little ones.

LETTER XXXII.

MR NEWTON.

Jan. 16, 1791.

I WRITE to you, thus early on the receipt of yours, beneath the impression of a severe shock from the sudden death, in my presence, of my darling little dog, by the breaking, as is supposed, of the aneurism in her throat, which had never seemed to have given her the least annoyance till the minute in which it destroyed her. Her life had been a three year's rapture, so cloudless had been her health, so gay was her spirit, so agile her light and bounding frame, so pleasurable her keen sensibilities. How I miss her, constant and sweet companion as she was, it is not in every heart to conceive, or, conceiving it, to pity.—Giovanni laments her not less fondly; and her fate left no eye unwet in my little household. Her loss has spread the gloom of silence through this large mansion, so thinly tenanted, that per-

petually rung with the demonstrations either of her joy or guardian watchfulness. Her incessant affection for me, her gentleness and perfect obedience, occur hourly to my remembrance, and "thrill my heart with melancholy pain."

My ingenious, learned, and benevolent neighbour, Mr Green, whose poetic talents are admirable, sent me the ensuing enchanting stanzas, the day after I lost the beautiful, the clean, the sensible, the beloved little creature.

To Miss Seward, on the death of her favourite Lap-dog Sappho.

Cease, gentle maid, to shed the frequent tear,
That dims the lustre of thy beamy eyes;
Grief, and her tempting luxuries forbear,
Nor longer heave those unavailing sighs.

Say, shall that heart, with noblest passions warm,
Where friendship and her train delight to rest,
That mind, where sense and playful fancy charm,
By fond extremes of pity sink oppress'd?

What though thy favourite, with her parting breath,
Implor'd thy succour in a piercing yell,
And seem'd to court thy kind regards in death,
As at thy feet, in mortal trance, she fell:

What though, when fate's resistless mandate came,
Thy friendly hand was stretch'd in vain to save,
Yet can that hand bestow a deathless fame,
And plant unfading flowers around her grave.

Then let thy strains in plaintive accents flow,
So shall thy much-loved Sappho still survive;
So shall her beauties shine with brighter glow,
And in thy matchless verse for ages live.

Thus, if perchance the splendid amber folds,
Some tiny insect in its crystal womb,
While its rare form the curious eye beholds,
The insect shares the glories of its tomb.

Severe has been the breath of this rugged winter;—I hope it spreads no lasting blight in your domestic comforts. I have been much out of health through its icy progress, and obliged to throw myself upon medical assistance. Within this month my disorder has given way to the skill of my physicians; but Mr Saville, the disinterested, the humane, still suffers seizures in his stomach, of an uncommon, and surely of an alarming nature. Heaven send they may be transient, and, in its mercy, restore to health a life so valuable! Adieu!

LETTER XXXIII.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

Jan. 19, 1791.

YOUR last confirms my good opinion of your taste, by the dislike it expresses to that rumbling, straining, tumid mass of incongruous metaphor, and incomprehensible ideas, the Delia Cruscan poems; though, like our view of one of the Derbyshire smelting mills, as we journey by it, a bright flash now and then streams through the black and powdery gloom.

The late Thomas Warton's compositions, of every kind, are infinitely dear to me. No man ever was, or probably ever will again be, so deeply learned in English poetry; and I have long been convinced, that there is no poetry, of any age or country, so well worth investigation. His preface and notes to Milton's Juvenile Works, convict Dr Johnson of ignorance, as well as of arrogance, concerning the subject upon which he stalked forth as the infallible decider in those boasted and over-erroneous Lives; while that preface, and those notes of Warton's, contain

passages which, in luminous beauty of idea, grace of expression, and harmony of period, oratory knows not to excel.

Our opinions are entirely in unison concerning the fashionable bravura-music. Equally do I despise it, and the false taste which, overlooking all the nobler powers and graces of that charming science, calls for difficulty and miracles from the regions of distortion.

Your poetical prophecy over the slave-purchasers is very striking and noble. It resembles, but not servilely, Pope's solemn anathema against

"The mean deserter of his brother's blood."

I hope to introduce to you, this spring, a friend of mine; who, if his health permits, will be then in London—a being eminently worthy the friendship of every feeling heart. Adieu!

LETTER XXXIV.

C. SMYTH, Esq. of Christ College, Oxford.

Feb. 1, 1792.

I AM too much flattered by your attention to resist the desire of acknowledging my sensibility. Health is not such a total deserter from me as when I wrote to you last; but she comes not with her pristine evenness and glow, nor with energy sufficient to shake off the oppressive fiend from my respiration, which seems to chain my lungs to the bottom of my stomach.

Mrs West's poems are correct, and her numbers harmonious. If they do not blaze with the fires of genius, they sparkle with the serene light of an elegant and cultivated fancy. Had I known her direction, I should have written to thank her for a compliment to my writings—too high, indeed, for their deserts, but very ingeniously imagined.

I am chagrined to find our friend, Cary, grown an heretic to the high poetic claims of his country. His ear has been debauched by the luscious

smoothness of Italian tones, till it delights no longer in the bolder and more majestic sounds of the English language. I hope the contagion of this apostacy will not spread. Its dissemination must prove very destructive to the pleasures which result from poetic studies. Milton and Young justly tell us, that partaken pleasures are alone worthy of the name. The beauties of a language so little cultivated, must throw the gratifications they afford into an at least comparative solitude. That they have destroyed the health of Cary's taste and feeling, his avowed contempt of the glowing, energetic, though melancholy Young, gives me proof. I grant Young a most unequal poet; but his host of faults are as dust in the balance against strength of thought so impressive; against allusions so plenteous and happy; against imagery so distinct, forcible, and original. It is to such English bards that Cary prefers the platonic trifling of Petrarch, and even that of his modern and feebler imitators in the idly warbling land of elegant concettos.

Bind yourself, dear Smyth, I conjure you, to the mast of your native language, lest the Syrens of Italy allure you to unnerve, on their flowery shore, the manly energies of taste, that must, when preserved in strength and firmness, secure

to the British bards the much indebted devotion of our rising youth. Adieu.

LETTER XXXV.

MR WHALLEY.

Feb. 26, 1792.

MY dear friend,—You received a very dejected letter from me, about a fortnight since, on Giovanni's departure for Bath, in a very dangerous state of health. I thank God the Bath waters agree with him; and Dr Harrington gives him the most cheering hopes, that they will restore a health so precious to all who know our friend, and know how to estimate uncommon talents and virtues. Conscious of your kind sympathy, I cannot delay to impart these consoling tidings.

I thank you cordially for offering to replace, in the first fruitfulness of your new little canine darling, the loss I have lately sustained. Yet, O! what other animal of her species can replace the comfort and the pleasure of her impassioned attachment, and uncommonly endearing qualities? and

I have determined to wait for a brother or sister of my sweet Sappho's, for the chance of obtaining, from the same parents, one that may resemble her. Sure I am that the shock of her sudden death materially injured Giovanni. He doted upon her; and, being out of health, the absolutely agonized grief with which he took up her lifeless body, and the bitter tears he shed whenever he entered this house for many ensuing days, from missing the glad welcome of her bounding affection and gay sensibility, preyed on his body as well as on his spirits. To this hour he cannot hear her mentioned, nor look at the places where she used to repose, without suffering visibly.

You asked me in your last, what I say to French politics now. I see no reason for more apprehensions on their account now than I felt in the summer. The cause of the emigrant princes seems hopeless, and they appear to have scattered their fire-brands in vain.

I dined with Lady Gresley on Monday last, and drank tea with her yesterday—have the pleasure to see her feeble and delicate frame recover its usual standard of—health, alas! it cannot justly be called. She and the young ladies desire kind compliments to Mrs W. and yourself.

Often do I think, with sighs, of the hopeless state of dear Mrs Jackson's injured hand—yet

Sophia tells me it nothing saddens the gaiety of her spirit. Charming woman, how I love her!

Have you read that wonderful book, The Rights of Woman. It has, by turns, pleased and displeased, startled and half-convinced me that its author is oftener right than wrong. Though the ideas of absolute equality in the sexes are carried too far, and though they certainly militate against St Paul's maxims concerning that important compact, yet do they expose a train of mischievous mistakes in the education of females;—and on that momentous theme this work affords much better rules than can be found in the sophist Rousseau, or in the plausible Gregory. It applies the spear of Ithuriel to their systems.

I hope the pleasure of seeing Mrs W. grow better has long since overcome the mal-influence upon your nerves from marine damps, and from the monotonous murmuring of boundless waters. Adieu.

LETTER XXXVI.

Mrs M. Powys.

March 6, 1792.

I was erroneously informed that you were at the Abbey when Mrs Powys died. It is well to have been spared the personal contemplation of a scene so mournful; and it is comfortable that your final visit left friendly and pleasing impressions upon your mind. I am glad also that a sum, by no means inconsiderable, devolves to you upon an event little imagined to be so near.

Bodily indisposition, and anxiety of mind, deepened to me the glooms of this rigid winter. Ah! my dear friend, you would at present inquire after Giovanni in London in vain. Very alarming symptoms of declining health obliged him to break his engagments there this Lent. His physicians ordered him to Bath. He grows gradually, though slowly better, for those strengthening waters;—but his health is far from being re-established. The managers at Covent-Garden entreat permission still to continue his name on their lists —assure him of being favoured, to his utmost

wish, as to the pressure of musical business, if he will but appear in the orchestra. This is very flattering to his professional fame; but it would be madness to abandon those salutary springs ere they have more fully restored the health he has lost. That restoration is of the utmost consequence to his daughter and her children, on whose exquisitely tender indulgence their support depends; and scarce less is it material to those friends who possess and know how to value the happiness of his society.

You, who are conscious of what long duration my esteem for him has been, will imagine my solicitude for his safety—the only remaining friend in my vicinity who participated the social and interesting pleasures of my youthful days, or with whom I can beguile and enliven the vapid hours of a much-deprived existence, by recalling their animated perceptions, habits, and associates,

"From the dark shadows of o'erwhelming years."

Poor Lovel Edgeworth! O, how dear, though personally unknown to me—he, too, I am informed, fades away again fast. I know Dr Darwin has an ill-divining spirit as to the event of his disease. O, life! how does thy general uncertainty embitter the best blessings thou canst in-

dividually bestow! That your pleasing young friend and pupil has shaken off, by Dr R. Darwin's assisting skill, the nervous fiends which annoyed her, I sincerely rejoice.

In despite of all those Powyssian vestiges which the dear old Abbey has, by this time, for ever lost, its walls, its apartments, its lawns, and its bowers, must always to me breathe a portion of resemblance to its beloved former inhabitants, and to interesting periods long passed and gone. Adieu, Adieu!

LETTER XXXVII.

To Dr Downman of Exeter, on his presenting to me his Poems.

March 15, 1792.

Sir,—I think myself honoured and obliged by the poetic present you have sent me, and by the gratifying and elegant sonnet which precedes its treasures. Your muse is no stranger to me. I have read, with delight, more than once, the poem, Infancy, by Dr Downman of Exeter. It is an excellent didactic composition, in which the

most material instructions are conveyed, through flowing numbers, and adorned by the picturesque graces.

These love elegies remind me of Hammond, and, like his, they must interest every feeling and affectionate heart. Shall I confess that I like the introduction the least of any thing in this pleasing collection. Verse is, in its very nature, artful; though, what should be its essence, poetry, that is, the metaphors, allusions, and imagery, are the natural product of a glowing and raised imagination. There may be verse without poetry, and poetry without verse; but when the genuine bard assumes these fetters, which custom has prescribed him, surely no elegance, no ornament, is beneath his care, which may contribute to embellish them.

Our best poetry is frequently alliterative, viz. Milton's, Dryden's, Pope's, Gray's, &c. and I am told the Greek and Latin classics use alliterations lavishly. A fine ear for the construction of numbers naturally falls into it. To such the avoiding it must be the effect of care and art, much more than its occasional use.

If, by "The doubled epithet of monstrous length," is meant the compound epithet, that is one of the nerves of our science, enabling us to condense our sense, which must increase its

force. If it means the using two or more adjectives to one substantive—that also, from the pen of genius, and when they are in climax, often produces admirable effects.

Pardon the freedom of this expostulation in defence of a practice you reprobate, and believe me much pleased to see Hygeia presenting the name of Downman to the Muses for their lists, in addition to those of Akenside, Armstrong, Garth, and Darwin.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Mrs Hayley.

March 19, 1792.

Ah! yes, dear Mrs Hayley, there has been but too much cause for apprehension from the nature of our friend's complaints, which the Bath waters alleviate, without, as yet, removing them.

Comfortless has this rigid and dreary winter proved to me. Not a week passed away without bringing me apprehension, grief, or illness; while the sable banner of death waved about our city

for many of my acquaintance. I felt myself incapable of every kind of exertion, and could neither visit my distant friends, nor receive them at my own house; so, from time to time, I deferred my journey into your neighbourhood, and sat, sad and shivering, and indisposed, by the fire, still hoping that milder and gladder days would come,

"And light me on my way to Nottingham."

But they came not; and then Mrs Martin, whose guest I was to have been, took wing for Bath, in quest of her lost health.

You mistake in thinking Giovanni's spirits not naturally good; nobody has more native hilarity. If his recovery proceeds, and he returns to us in tolerable health, I hope the vernal gales will blow you and Mrs Archdale hither, escorted by the * Robin Goodfellow, if small enough for a travelling companion.

I am glad you admire our fair blossom, Miss Howard. When exercise adds roses to the lilies, her beauty is exquisite. The eastern poets, who compare their mistresses to young roes, I have often thought give us verses which describe

* A portrait of Mr Hayley's little protegé, in the character of Robin Goodfellow, by Romney.

her. There is an innocent wildness in her clear shining eyes, which, like those of the roe and the stag, are at once lively and timid.

As for your French ballad—It is true I profess myself a cobler of songs; but I sicken at the sight of a French one under my awl and my hammer, the double rhymes which their tunes require are so unmanageable. Though, from the pen of Voltaire, this in question is a strange string of amorous conceits. That the gentleman feels a certain something for the lady, he labours hard to make appear; and it is more tender than love, and more faithful than friendship. I should like to know the name of this non-descript feeling. Adieu!

LETTER XXXIX.

Rev. Dr Gregory.

March 25, 1792.

You are wise, my dear Sir, in not sluicing off your golden leisure into the unprofitable, the fameless channel of private correspondence. While I want resolution to avoid doing so, it is

in vain to inquire after my literary pursuits. Some epistolary duty or other is always stepping in between me and them.

Now let me thank you for two instances of kind attention, which enabled me to pass several hours very agreeably; the introduction of your ingenious friend, Mr Rogers, of Liverpool, and the reperusal of your ingenious book, the Life of Chatterton. I read it with much interest and pleasure on its first appearance; for it is an eloquent, spirited, and valuable memoir of the most extraordinary genius which perhaps ever existed. This ill-starred youth certainly found ancient and curious manuscripts, which furnished the hint of his design, and upon which he poured the splendours of his rich imagination, kindling and flowering as he proceeded. Very superficially, indeed, is the perfection of modern harmony, and the grace of modern imagery, veiled by obsolete verbalism. The involuntary imitations, and often entire plagiarisms from our late poets, too striking for the possibility of coincidence, are, of themselves, sufficient proof how largely at least these poems are modern. You have pointed out several instances, and I am struck with several more which you do not notice.

I generally agree with you as to the high degree of estimation in which you hold the particu-

lar passages you cite in the notes. The description of morning, from the second part of the Battle of Hastings, is eminently poetic; but that of Salisbury Plain might surely have been written by anybody. Except the words *drear array*, it contains no poetry. "There stands a pile of rugged mountains placed upon each other, which could not be the work of human hands." Those very words have, questionless, been used in common conversation by many a commonly sensible traveller, describing Stonehenge.

I think also that there is not much fertility of genius in the ballad, cited page 157. The comparison to the doe seeking shelter in green trees, is the only uncommon thought it contains. The shepherd's assertion, that none but his sheep will come to interrupt them, is in a canzonet, set to music by Morley, in Queen Elizabeth's time, and beginning, "Haste my Nannette," &c. The whole fascinating first eclogue I got by heart years ago. Substituting modern for the obsolete words, the rhythm became as melodious as the ideas are beautiful. Collins's eclogues probably suggested to Chatterton the idea of these, which are, I doubt not, wholly his. There is a striking similarity between my favourite Raufe and Robert, and the fourth of Collins, Agib and Secander. Sweet as is the latter, I yet prefer the simpler

tenderness and native scenery of the imitation, to the oriental descriptions and flowing numbers of the original.

I am as sorry for your moleism to Ossian as to Sterne. It induces you to do Macpherson a great deal too much honour. Not that I believe he had ancient manuscripts, any more than I believe his imagination responsible for the original, the solemn, the sublime mythology; the Salvatorial landscapes, and the countless emanations of natural and beautiful sensibilities, scattered through those fragments, collected with infinite industry by their editor from oral traditions.

Catching a portion of their fire, he connected them, doubtless, with much of his own, weaving them together for the Fingal, into something like a regular epic. Probably the episodes are entirely Erse. Internal evidence lies here, with all its weight, for the originality of the Erse poetry, as it is totally against it in the Rowleyan.

I impute the fustian passages, of which it must be allowed there are several, to Macpherson; and it is almost all I can allow him as to the images and ideas. Great praise, however, he merits, for the judicious adoption of the style of the Scripture poetry for their vehicle. It amazes me, that any one, admiring the poetry of the sacred pages, can be insensible to excellence so

much on a level, and resembling it so strikingly, without servile imitation.

We find, from Mason's edition of his friend's letters, how dear the Ossian was to Gray. Though Chatterton could not obtain its beauty when he attempted to write in that style, yet that he felt its high claims, is, by that attempt, demonstrated. We always admire before we imitate. I am an enthusiast to the writings of Chatterton; yet, if I was reduced to the choice of no more looking at a line of them, or of eternal abstinence from the pages of Ossian, I would, of the two, resign the former.

Never yet have I opened the Erse volumes without a poignant thrill of pensive transport. The lonely scenery of a barren and mountainous country rises before me. By turns I see the blue waves of their seas, rolling in light; and then, by the dark storm, lashed into foam, and bursting upon their rocks. I view the majestic and melancholy graces, in the persons of the warriors and their mistresses, walking over the silent hills. The tender consecration of the memory of their lost friends, and of the vanished years, are in unison with all the feelings of my soul; and their machinery, sailing upon the blasts of the desert, at once awes and delights me.

Not Homer himself has given us a speech of sublimer spirit and fire than the following:

"Fly, thou chief of peace," said Calmor, "fly to thy silent hills, where the spear of battle never shone! Pursue the dark-brown deer of Cromla, or stop, with thine arrows, the bounding roes of Lena! But, blue-eyed son of Semo, Cuchullin, scatter thou the sons of Lochlin, and roar through the ranks of their pride! Let no vessel from the kingdom of snow bound on the waves of Inistore! Ye winds of Erin rise!—howl ye whirlwinds of the heath!—amid your tempest let Calmor die, if ever chace was sport to him so much as the battle of shields!"

The description of Crugal's ghost, in the second book of Fingal, is one of the sublimest, as that of Margaret, in Mallet's celebrated ballad, is one of the most beautiful that poetry can shew us.

"His face was as the beam of the setting moon; his robes were of the clouds of the hill; his voice as the gale of the reedy lake; his eyes two decaying flames; and dark was the wound on his breast. Dim, and in tears he stood, and stretched his pale hand to the hero."

> "Her face was like an April morn,
> Clad in a wintry cloud."

I meant to have observed, before I quitted the subject of your Chattertonian volume, that I think you have not given sufficient praise to the impersonization of winter in the elegy on T. Phillips. It appears to me so finely conceived, as that no poet, living or dead, has ever excelled it.

By this prolix letter, you would not think that I have been a long invalid, from disorders contracted by the sedentary employment of a correspondence oppressively extended. I repeat, how much wiser are you, and how much better do you employ your time!

Adieu. All health, all happiness, all celebrity attend you;—yet you are now surely treading beaten ground, whose fruit and flowers have all been gathered. However, as I have no great appetite for politics, and am consequently uninterested in the minute history of a period so near our own time, and with whose events we are so familiar, I have but an incompetent guess concerning the degree of acceptability with the public which your present undertaking will meet;—but I remain always, with great esteem, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XL.

CHRIS. SMYTH, ESQ. of Christ Church, Oxon.

April 2, 1792.

YOUR attentions to me are every way gratifying. I consider the monody on dear, gallant, unfortunate André, as much honoured by your bestowing upon it your valuable leisure, and the fruits of a learned education, that it may appear in a Latin dress. Nothing can be more flattering to me than to know that my writings are translated by the ingenious.

As for the drawing you are so good to promise, I absolutely long for it. With what pleasure shall I gaze upon my native scenery, traced by your hand! The first scenic objects that met my infant glance, and impressed me with their lonely and romantic grandeur, were the mountains, the rocks, and the vales of Derbyshire. Nursed in their bosom till I was nine years old, and often passing the summer months there through my youth, though Lichfield had then become my residence, poetic descriptions and penciled resemblances please me best when they take the Salva

torial style. This early-acquired predilection steeps my eyes in the dews of pensive transport, when they stray over the pages of Ossian.

I dare believe you wish me the return of that important blessing, whose absence withers the bloom of every other good, though it is often possessed without being enjoyed. Alas! by the want of it only do we learn to estimate its infinite value!

Scarcity of leisure had prevented me from having examined Mrs West's poems with sufficient attention when I wrote to you last. Their merit rises upon me. They possess more Aonian fire than I had then perceived. The natural tenderness in the third elegy, and the energetic spirit and bold landscape-painting in the third pastoral, delight me. Her tragedy is too much of the cold declamatory school. Jephson is the only fine tragedy writer of this day; and our wise public critics either affect to despise his writings through envy, or are really insensible from stupidity, of their high claims to the meed of genius and true dramatic fire.

When you see Cary, make my compliments; little as I am in charity with him for preferring the "jays of Italy to the larks of England." A publication which came out in 1755, I read with pleasure in my days of girlhood, without having

seen it since. Last night, looking among some old books, I found it, and soon opened upon the following passage.—I should observe that it is entitled Letters on Taste.

" Nothing vitiates the poetic taste of young men more than a fondness for the Italian poets. Their forced allusions, their concetti, and perpetual affectation of hunting for pretty thoughts indiscriminately on every subject, are so many deviations from good writing. They degrade the dignity of elevated poetry, and totally destroy that touching simplicity which is the vital grace of the pastoral. Not that I mean to extend this censure to every part of their compositions. We find beautiful passages in Tasso's Jerusalem of one kind, and in his Aminta of the other; in Ariosto's Orlando, and in Guarini's Pastor Fido. Nor would I snatch from them the palm for having invented the dramatic pastoral. Yet are there, in those celebrated pieces, the Aminta and Pastor Fido, such a tasteless profusion of that shining stuff, which Boileau calls *clinquant*, as must disgust every reader whose fancy is chastened by that parent of just criticism, unerring Nature.

" I should be glad if some of these gentlemen, who assert the general superiority of the Italian poets over those of our country, would impartial-

ly compare Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess and Milton's Comus with the above mentioned pieces. They would then find that branch of laurel so successfully, by those great writers, transplanted from Italy to England, flourishing much better in our temperate climate, than on the banks of the Tyber. But, as the Faithful Shepherdess is more precisely a dramatic pastoral than Comus, let the contention rest on that alone."

This writer then proceeds to quote several passages from the Faithful Shepherdess, all of extreme beauty. I cannot resist inserting one of them here. By the way, Mr T. Warton very justly observes, in his notes to the Juvenile Poems of Milton, that the imitations in Comus of this pastoral of Fletcher's are so near, as almost to amount to plagiarism. Now for the finished description of a sulky, idle, malicious character:

——————" A shepherd dwells
Down by the moor, whose life hath ever shewn
More sullen discontent than Saturn's brow,
When he sits frowning on the births of men:
One that doth wear himself away in loneness;
And never joys, except it be in breaking
The holy plighted troths of mutual souls:
One that lusts after every several beauty,
But yet was never known to like, or love,
Were the face fairer, and more full of charms
Than Phœbe in her fulness, or the youth

Of smooth Lyæus;—whose nigh-starved flocks
Are always scabby, and infect all sheep
They feed withal; whose lambs are ever last,
And die before their weaning; and whose dog
Is, like his master, lean, and full of scurf,
Not caring for the pipe or whistle."

The genius of this portrait may challenge the best poetic pencil of ancient or modern Italy.

Adieu!

LETTER XLI.

To Mr Robarts of London, on the Death of his Wife.

May 14, 1792.

My dear Sir,—Having expressed to Mr Osorio my concern for your great loss, I would not too soon intrude upon your affliction by condolences, which only disturb and yet more painfully agitate the heart during the first paroxysms of anguish. I am well aware how sharp they must be to an affectionate husband, upon the loss of her who was endeared by long proofs of affection, in a union of so many years duration, and

united with him in all his interests, views, and hopes. By such a deprivation, the habits of life are broken, and all is dreariness and vacuity around us. But the softener, time, weans us at length from the mournful luxuries of unavailing grief; and the necessity of turning our attention into new channels, however oppressive that necessity at first appears, restores, by degrees, the vigour of the mind, and the cheerfulness of the spirits; while a consciousness that the friend, whose eternal absence we deplore, has exchanged a state of suffering for a state of blessedness, gradually extracts, in this progress, all the corrosive particles from our sorrow.

That those restoratives of peace and comfort may have their earliest and best effect upon your mind, is very sincerely my wish.

With kind condolences to the many filial mourners for my lost cousin, I remain, dear Sir, your obliged friend.

LETTER XLII.

REV. R. POLWHELE.

May 25, 1792.

SIR,—I think myself much honoured and obliged, by a present from the bards of Devonshire and Cornwall, of their collected poetic orbs; and that the brightest star in the galaxy bends its auspicious rays on my muse, in an elegant manuscript sonnet, their harbinger.

I am not insensible to the many emanations of genius and fancy in these volumes; though it has been my lot, alas! to bend upon them an eye languid from indisposition, an attention wandering, and robbed of all its energy, by the dangerous illness of a friend, long, very long beloved; in whose sight, and in whose prized society, I have lived from my earliest youth; who knew and loved all those dear friends, of whom the grave has already deprived me; a friend, in whose clear spirit I never observed one cold shade of selfishness, one spot of depravity.

It concerns me to find that you have been so unfortunate in the loss of your infants; yet, to

how sweet a sonnet has that loss given birth! The general fault to my taste of the sonnets in this collection, is, their want of the Miltonic breaks at various parts of the lines; which breaks appear to me a necessary characteristic in that species of measure, from having accustomed myself to consider the best of Milton's sonnets, as its proper model; yours to your infant Maria, has the break, or floating pause, and with that property, every other charm that can endear it to the heart and the imagination.

Your Lyrics, which open the second volume, are very fine. The Ode to Sleep, and the Mona are sublime; that to the river Coly, picturesque, interesting, and lovely. The Picture Gallery I like the least, because I least understand it.

My ever grateful devotion to the charming, though now much neglected muse of Shenstone, will not permit me to restrain expression of the regret and disgust I feel to see this pleasing miscellany disgraced by a feeble attempt to ridicule her natural and beautiful effusions. Shenstone appears to me the only professed pastoral poet, who has struck the true pastoral chords; who has that graceful simplicity, which the pastorals of Virgil and Pope want, without any of that coarseness into which, attempting to be more natural, by painting vulgar nature, Spenser, Gay,

and Phillips fell. Shenstone, actually living in the daily pursuit of rural cares, and in the habitual cultivation of scenic beauty, wrote as he felt. He places before us the landscapes by which he was surrounded; and all the coy graces of a refined imagination, and of a feeling heart, flow naturally in his verse. Ample, surely, is their power to elevate, and render interesting the benevolent employments of the country gentleman, blended with the pursuits of the scholar, and a taste for the fine arts; the dignity of friendship, and the animated, yet delicate solicitudes of growing passion. Something of excellence must surely be wanting in the head or heart of those who perceive not the delicious influence of these unobtrusive, these genuine beauties of sentiment and description, who forget that we owe the happiest imitation of Spenser's best manner to Shenstone. The schoolmistress is alone sufficient to entitle its author to an high seat in the poetic fame of Britain.

When you see Dr Downman, have the goodness to present my best compliments and thanks for the obliging letter with which he lately favoured me. My pen had conveyed its acknowledgements to himself, if the state of my health and spirits permitted the cultivation of any new correspondence, in addition to the too extended

one in which I have been long involved. I remain, with much esteem, Sir, your faithful, obliged, and obedient servant.

LETTER XLIII.

H. Cary, Esq. of Christ Church.

May 29, 1792.

I thank you for your letter, and should be sorry to pass it over in cold silence, though Heaven knows I am at present most unfit to enter the lists of criticism; for my heart is drooping with sorrow, and sickening with apprehension from the dangerous illness of a long-dear friend.

Your assertion, that Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton are the greatest poets of this country, may be controverted. Chaucer had certainly genius; but beneath the rust of his obsolete, coarse, and inharmonious diction, there is no ascertaining its degree. Milton is perhaps the third great poet the world has produced; however, we are not to forget, that, to use your own words, "in the sublimer province of poetry, imagination," Shakespeare holds the light so far above even

him, that Chaucer and Spenser, thrown into Milton's scale, will hardly make up the difference. Such is the poetic glory of England. The remembrance of Shakespeare entirely does away your assertion, that "true poetic excellence has been more or less cultivated amongst us, according to the degree in which the Italian poets have been admired and studied.

> "For he was ours unschool'd, and to us brought,
> More than all Europe, Greece, and Asia taught."

The late great Warton has proved, that Milton studied, and borrowed as lavishly from his poetic predecessors in this country, as he did from the Greek, the Roman, and Italian bards. Brown, Drayton, and Fletcher were his models in Comus, L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso, greatly as he has improved upon them.

I should by no means have been sorry that you had studied and admired the Italian poets; but it is of your unjust, unpatriotic preference of them to the sublimer bards of your own country, that I am indignant. You plead the estimation in which they are held by Milton, Gray, Mason, Hayley, and Warton. It is said the latter knew Italian very imperfectly; and his works prove, that English poetry, from its first dim dawn to its present meridian splendour, was the chief ob-

ject of his attention. I never heard of any such preference, as you have given, maintained by either of the other four, however they might take delight in exploring the poetic efflorescence of Italy. Indeed, I have heard Mr Hayley assert the superiority of the British bards, collectively, to those of any other country. Religiously do I believe, that the mass of genius, accumulated in this country since Spenser's time, is far greater than any other nation can boast Under this conviction, I am perfectly content to limit my delights in that charming science within the pale of my own exquisitely rich and harmonious language; the growing Latinity of which has already, indeed has long, rendered it sufficiently vowelled, sufficiently sweet, copious, and sonorous, to do every justice of sound to the sentiments, the allusions, the impersonizations of genius.

I confess I cannot perceive the high value of the simile you were so good to translate for me from * Dante. It is undoubtedly a natural de-

* Mr Cary says, "The bard Dante begins with this comparison, so exquisitely drawn from nature:—'As the sheep come out of the fold, some alone, others in pairs, others three together, the rest stand fearful, putting their eyes and noses to the ground, and whatever the first does, all the others do the same, crowding at her back. If she makes a stand, simple and tranquil, they, without knowing the reason, do the same.

scription of the manners and habits of a flock of sheep; but what truth, what sublimity, what beauty you can see in comparing a crowd of spirits, or ghosts, to them, I cannot conceive. If sheep are such silly imitators of their leader, why are we to suppose a troop of ghosts would all put their eyes and noses to the ground because the first might do so, in the same sort of ambition with which the clown tumbles after Harlequin; and so I can discern no apposition in this vaunted simile, without which, a simile is but on a level with his, who said, "even as a wheelbarrow goes rumble rumble, even so that man lends another sixpence."

The imaginary resemblance of a flying spirit to the meteors of night is poetic enough, but not half so sublime as the comparison in the old ballad, William and Margaret, of the corpse, or apparition of a beautiful young woman, to an April morning, "clad in a wintry cloud."

Adieu! dear Cary.—May you ascend the eminences of literary fame, by whatever paths you may choose to approach them; and never may you know

So this crowd of spirits stopt at our approach,' &c.—Speaking of the swift motion of a spirit that flew from them, he says, 'I never saw the lighted vapours at the beginning of night cut the air so swiftly, nor when the sun is setting in the clouds of autumn.' Such are the sketches of Dante's pen."—S.

such heart-aches as I now feel to pall and damp your intellectual ardours!

LETTER XLIV.

LADY BLACKISTON.

June 5, 1792.

IT is a satisfaction to me, dear Lady B., that the sea no longer divides us. May your new home, in the gay and beautiful * city, increase the health and cheerfulness of yourself and good Colonel Cane!

The sight of your Ladyship's well-known hand at once pleased and reproached me. Alas! frequent ill health, long anxiety, and apprehension for the life of a very dear friend, weighing about my heart, created a great disinclination to my pen. Never have I known so long a depression of spirits. I often fear that the days of cheerfulness and peace will no more return. It concerns me to find that you, too, my amiable friend, have sources of deep anxiety for your heart's second

* Bath.

dearest object. May those clouds which the grasping and injurious avarice of his worthless kinsmen have raised about his destiny soon disperse, and his prosperity restore peace to his affectionate mother's heart!

You inquire after Mrs Mompessan. She has a nephew, Mr Heathcote, envoy from our Court to that of Bon, in Germany, where, some few years since, he married a lady of that country, whose fortune was large, and with whom he now lives in great splendour. Mrs M. had affairs to settle with this gentleman, which required to be adjusted in person. Disappointed, from time to time, by his failing to execute his schemes of visiting England, she took the spirited resolution of going over to him; and to render the expence of the expedition as light as possible, since her generous disposition, and a but competent fortune, allows her no money to lavish, she took not with her either friend, or man-servant, or maid-servant. Alone, at sixty-three, she crossed the sea, and the continent; alone, she returned to her native country, after a three months' residence at Bon. Her pleasant home again receives her, in amended health, and invigorated spirits; charmed with her visit to this beloved nephew, at whose munificent table she conversed with noblemen,

with men of letters, with politicians, and philosophers.

Platonic, as you humorously call him, disappoints my expectations, raised by his attachment to amiable Mrs B. I suppose he is one of those many men who, like old Shadrach and his cousins, can walk through fire with an unsinged skin. I hope the lady's is as impenetrable; and then, as he is a good soul, no harm will be done. I had set my heart on permanent good to our friend as the result; but time runs on, and my wish returns to me unfulfilled.

This large mansion still contains me, and the lovely scenes around it are in all the glow of summer beauty; but my heart is heavy, and deprives me of the capacity to enjoy them.

Adieu, dear Lady B., adieu!

LETTER XLV.

Miss H. Williams.

July 26, 1792.

Depressed as my spirits have long been, and yet remain, by the alarmingly declining health of

one friend, and by the miseries of others, to whose feelings and destiny I cannot be indifferent, my heart will not dispense with addressing you, through my pen, on your return to your native country. I must regret, that it is only on a transient visit that you determine to reside in a kingdom convulsed by fierce and contending factions; but your wishes are with the moderate party; the civic crown and laurels of Fayette are spotless in your eyes.

The flame of liberty must glow in your bosom with no common fervour, to make you choose to be so near a spectator of the struggles of that yet distracted country; while the many who tarried "in her vineyards, and made themselves an home in her cities, now pass through her land like a river."

Her king appears, at last in earnest, to have imitated virtue, "till, seeming good, he grew to what he seemed." The account last week's General Evening Post brought us of those mutual instances of affection and trust, which passed between him and the populace, on the eventful anniversary, filled my eyes with those delicious tears which it is such luxury to shed. I cannot, at least I will not, doubt its reality. If this generous influence continues to increase and spread, without degenerating into insolence in the one, in-

to servility in the many, the league of despotism must be fruitless, when, like the Greeks before the hosts of Xerxes,

> " One spirit shall rule the free, and every eye
> Glare on their envious foes, not on themselves,
> Pernicious fire, to wither all their strength,
> To leave them of their boasted vigour drain'd,
> Repuls'd, exhaustless, spiritless, and fallen."

But if in France the systems of freedom shall prove baseless visions, they must dissolve beneath the fatal influence of that wild enthusiasm, which, hurrying one of the noblest of the virtues beyond the bounds of wisdom, forces her into the frontiers of her kindred vice, where, into whose dark complexion her once clear and radiant visage must degenerate. Let me, however, quit the subject, since I feel the presumption of all such remarks to you, who have considered it so deeply, and written upon it largely and well.

Not yet have I thanked you for the kind leave-taking billet with which you favoured me on the eve of your heroic emigration; but dearly welcome was that, as every other token of your amity. With fervent wishes for your prosperity and happiness, I remain, my noble-minded Helen, faithfully yours.

LETTER XLVI.

Mrs T———.

July 29, 1792.

Ah! dearest madam, I find, from the contents of your last, that we have each had long and painful experience of sickness and of sorrow, since the year commenced; but you are at present blest with two fine children. I trust they will live to repay you yet more and more for the increase of pain and debility which their birth and infant nurture cost you.

It grieves me, that the changing systems of Mr T———'s devotion produce gloom and discomfort in your connection with him; but so it must be, except your mind could, Camelion-like, assume the varying colours of his. After having so long administered in the priesthood of Calvinism, he becomes a strict disciple of Barclay, renounces rationality as the guide of faith, and allows no test of truth but inward feeling and imaginary inspiration. From being a warm admirer of the elegant arts, you tell me he places a genius for them on a level with a natural propensi-

ty to any particular vice, and thinks it ought to be the study of man to subdue the one, as well as the other. The quakers are a people whom I both love and esteem in their moral capacity. Their freedom from ostentation, the purity, the simplicity, the gentleness of their manners, seem more assimilated to the gospel precepts, than the exterior habits of any other community. But, totally rejecting reason as the director of our religious faith, they divest Christianity of all her superiority over other theology. Every wild enthusiast of the Pagan, the Bramin, the Mahometan worship is as likely to be right as the Christian, if the umpireism of dispassionate examination is to be rejected, and the ardours of zeal confided in implicity. Then, that people of common sense can be so lost in gloomy vision, as to believe there can be merit in suppressing those talents which God has variously dispensed amongst mankind, is strange indeed. What is it but human perverseness, frustrating the evident intentions of providence, just as insanely as does the melancholy papist, who dreams there is virtue in precluding, by celibacy, the sweet and sacred ties of wedded love—

> " Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
> Relations dear, and all the charities
> Of father, son, and brother?"

The justly blameless arts that grace, adorn, ennoble and sweeten existence, may, doubtless, be cultivated to the glory of our Creator, who surely, not in vain, endowed the human mind with a power of bringing them to admirable perfection. Every thing which employs the attention innocently and ingeniously, has a natural tendency to prevent vice, of which idleness is the nurse, and "to exalt us in the scale of rational beings." A depraved spirit may certainly pervert things in themselves good and laudable; but such adventitious debitement does not stain the ermine whiteness of God's bounteous and varied gifts to the capacities of men.

I am sorry also to hear you confess a growing insensibility to the first and loveliest of the sciences, to which the bias of your genius originally inclined. I deplore the vexations and misfortunes which have palled and sickened those fine perceptions, whose delights might frequently soften and assuage their harassings. May whiter hours restore their softer energy! Adieu!

LETTER XLVII.

Mrs Jackson.

August 3, 1792.

Yes, I thank Heaven, "it is yet with me the season of hope concerning the life of my valued friend." The gleams of amendment, so long impermanent, have of late been more enduring. Sea-bathing is prescribed. Mr Hayley, benevolent as illustrious, has shewn the most friendly attentions to Giovanni's disorder since it became alarming. He warmly invites him to the Sussex coast, where, last summer, a few miles from his Edenic home, he fitted up a marine cottage, that contains five apartments. There he wishes my friend and his daughter to reside, and thither, he says, he will himself accompany them; but, as the distance from hence is nearly twice as far as many of the other coasts, it was necessary to make some inquiries concerning bathing-carts, guides, &c. which, it is very probable, that situation has not, for Mr Hayley swims well, and would not want them; and his passion for hermit-retirement makes me guess, that it rises on

some picturesque and lonely shore, where accommodations for an invalid might not easily be procured. Mr Hayley's answer, expected daily, will determine the matter.

Darwin's splendid web of poetic fancy appears at length completely woven. It will shine to future ages, largely contributing to the lyric glories of a period, which has so plenteously teemed with the rich fruits of Parnassus, and of every species except the dramatic, where general sterility must be confessed. This first part of the botanic poem is still more magnificently inventive than the second, which, in the order of publication, so whimsically took the lead of its elder-born; but involving a much larger portion of the abstruse parts of philosophic science, and the language being very highly Latinized, it will be felt and understood by yet fewer readers. Those, however, who really enter into the spirit of the work, who bring to the perusal a warm poetic taste, scholastic learning, and considerable knowledge in experimental philosophy; or who, like myself, possessing only the former, are content to be indebted for the comprehension of its beauties to a diligent attention to the notes, and a frequent recurrence to the Latin dictionary; all such will, I think, be conscious, that, far from sinking in the scale of genius, it ascends yet above

its predecessor. I dare assure myself that you will be one of that number.

This same brilliant bard is a strange as well as an illustrious being, and, on many occasions, infuses into his petite-morale, a portion of that daring spirit with which his muse seizes upon every thing in nature, art, or anecdote, whether analogous, or even heterogeneous, and bends them to the purpose of her moment. When Mr Mundy had finished his enchanting local poem, the Needwood Forest, Dr Darwin wrote three little poetic compliments on the work. To the best he put his son's initials; to the second best his own; and to the worst mine. Not a syllable of any of the three did I see, or hear of, till I saw them in print at the conclusion of Mr Mundy's poems. I did not like this manœuvre, and reproached him with it. He laught it off in a manner peculiar to himself, and with which he carries all his points of despotism. Now he retains, without the least acknowledgment, not even the quotation-mark, and places, as the exordium of this his resplendent poem, a copy of verses of mine, which I wrote in his botanic garden, near Lichfield, in the year 1779, when he himself was an inhabitant of Lichfield. My little poem was a mere poetic landscape of the newly smiling valley, which had been a morass till drained, cultivated, and adorn-

ed by his taste. My verses had the honour of suggesting to the Doctor the first idea of this exquisite composition. When I shewed them to him—after praising them highly, he exclaimed, "Here the nymph of botany and her train should be introduced, together with the whole Linnean or sexual system of plants."

The disingenuousness of making no mention that the scenic description, with which he opens his poem, was the work of another, had been of no consequence, if Mr Stevens, a friend of the Doctor's, had not sent it to the Gentleman's Magazine for May 1783, where they now stand in my name, and from whence they were copied into the Annual Register, as I think, and into several other of the public prints at that period. Without consulting me, the Doctor had put some additional lines of his own at the conclusion, introducing the nymph of botany, and this before Mr Stevens obtained a copy. My verses said nothing of any such personage. They introduced the genius of the place, by which I meant the Doctor himself, who had opened that paradise in the wild. There are several more alterations in them, and some few more lines of the Doctor's inwoven with my landscape, as it now forms the above-mentioned exordium—but still four-

fifths of them are mine verbatim, and mine the whole order of the scenery, so that a charge of plagiarism must rest somewhere.

Dear Lady Gresley, with whom I often talk of you, is gone to Buxton with two of her daughters—alas! her lameness increases—but disease and pain nothing damp her intellectual energies, nor the generous warmth of her heart.

You and your sweet girl will, I trust, receive mutual benefit from the breezes and the baths of Weymouth. Truly and warmly should I rejoice in hearing that you were both restored to the health of former years! that the dear plump white hand which, this time twelvemonth, extended to me viands that your society made nectareous, was restored to all its powers of exertion.

Mrs Stokes has lost her darling little girl, and experiences, for the first time in her life, the misery of losing, by death, an object of her kind affection, when its emerging sensibilities, miraculously animated and engaging for such early infancy, had all centered in the most impassioned fondness for her mother, in whose arms the beauteous creature had incessantly lived, little Honora, named, at my request, after the dear angel I doubly lost. Your cousin S. disdains, as extra-

vagant and romantic, the excess of our friend's anguish:

"Alas! she scorns who never had a child!"

Adieu!

LETTER XLVIII.

Lady Gresley.

August 29, 1792.

I am truly sorry to learn that your Ladyship's residence at Buxton, has been attended by so much pain in your poor disordered joints; but I am comforted by recollecting, from observation, and, indeed, experience, that such apparent increase of present malady often happens on first trial of those waters, where their subsequent effects prove most salutary. It augurs well for the attainment of that relief, in which all who love you are interested, that your general health and spirits do not sink beneath the present increase of this aching torment.

In a few hours after I received your kind and

valued letter, arrived Mrs and Miss Dyott of Whittington, and remained my guests during four days. The pleasure of their beloved Mrs Lee's recent restoration from the imminent danger in which she had long languished, left a sunny glow upon their native cheerfulness. They were so good to express frequent satisfaction in their visit; enjoyed my spacious old rooms, and the embowered, the rural, the quiet scene which surrounds them. Fond of choral service, they delighted in the harmonious grandeur of ours, though he, alas! was absent, whose fine voice, and ever-various expression, had so long been its highest boast.

Mr Leigh's family passed an evening with me while the Dyotts were here, together with the ingenious Dr Harwood, the Anatomic Professor at Cambridge, whose Proteus-voice, countenance, and attitudes, can assume, at pleasure, the characteristic oddities, both personal and colloquial, of all his acquaintance. With him came an ingenuous and beautiful young student of that university, his name Belchere. Miss Leigh enchanted us with the lightning-brilliance of her execution in Clementi's lessons on the harpsichord. Her father's comic spirit diffuses convivial pleasure wherever he presides; nor did it fail us that evening, though he neither looked nor was in health.

Your Ladyship is very good to inquire after my poor friend Mr Saville. He set out for the sea yesterday morning. His health, which appeared to amend, though slowly, had faded again during the seven or eight preceding days.

Mrs Knowles, the witty and the eloquent, was amongst us, on a week's visit, since you left Lichfield. She made flaming eulogiums upon French anarchy, which she calls freedom, and uttered no less vehement philippics against every thing which pertains to monarchy. For myself, I have ever loved and venerated the cause of liberty; and wished every restraint upon power which can be consistent with that order, and those links of subordination which bind, in one agreeing whole, the necessarily various degrees and employments of civilized life; but I every day grow more and more sick of that mischievous oratory which ferments and diffuses the spirit of sedition. In the name of peace and comfort, let those who are dissatisfied with a government, in which their lives and properties are secure, which is great and revered in the eyes of every neighbouring nation; against which no sword is drawn, and to whose commerce every port is open; let them go to America, where they may be quiet, or to France, where their energies may have ample scope;—

but let them not attempt to muddy the at present silver-currents of our prosperity.

I do not yet wish that the blood-thirsty invaders of unhappy France may succeed; nor do I at all apprehend that they can be victorious. At the king's deposition I felt very indignant;—but if, as it now seems to appear, he was secretly plotting with the invaders, he deserves his fate, and justifies those who have abjured him. Surely we shall have the wisdom to persist in our neutrality. Ill as the French have, in many respects, acted, distracted as are their councils, and impotent as at present seem their laws, there is danger that the worst consequences would ensue to us should we arm against them; that the contagion of ideal liberty might infect our troops, as it has infected those of the Austrians and Prussians. Paine's pernicious and impossible system of equal rights, is calculated to captivate and dazzle the vulgar; to make them spurn the restraints of legislation, and to spread anarchy, murder, and ruin over the earth.

Poor Mr Adams is again in the deepest distress and terror for the life of his son. The late accounts darken every ray of hope on that subject; but Miss Adams is returned, and said to be in tolerable health. I have long thought, though

it was mere conjecture, that a certain friend of ours had matrimonial inclinations for that young woman. Fortune, if I read him right, is a powerful nuptial object in his consideration. He has many good qualities; but his affections have no dangerous energy that should make them rebels to his interest; and he much respected Miss Adams's understanding and virtues. However, from the apprehension of parental purse-proud interference, he played a game too deeply sentimental, wearing the masque of friendship to the lady herself too long. They have corresponded during the whole of this lengthened absence, still platonically, doubtless; for, lo! she brings home a favoured lover; so

"Platonics have ill-luck, and Harry's spur is cold."

Part of this long letter was written yesterday; but, interrupted in its progress, and dining and supping at Mrs Cobb's, I could not finish it till this morning. Our party there was an old friend and his wife, Mr and Mrs ———, whom I have not seen during a very long time. His affectionate assiduities engrossed four golden years of my earliest youth; yet, at length, from his preference of this lady, I wore the willow, but with no

drooping, at least no long drooping heart. They are the guests of Mr and Mrs Arden at Longcroft. I go there to pass Friday with them. Mr and Mrs ——— are highly respected by all who know them, and live in the garden of Norfolk. We are cordial friends. I abjure the pride which could not freely pardon a perhaps involuntary fickleness, produced by necessary absence, and engaging presence, and in which the secret heart of the deserted soon learnt to felicitate itself.

Adieu, dear Lady Gresley! propitious, ah! speedily propitious to you be the Naiads of those pain-assuaging waters!

LETTER XLIX.

Rev. T. S. Whalley.

Sept. 4, 1792.

All you so kindly say on the subject of Mr Saville's disease entirely meets my conviction. I am clear it has been produced by the complicated objects of solicitude, which situation and propensity have created; the intenseness of his botanic studies and labours, united with the business of

his profession, of his vicarial stewardship, of his solicitude for his daughter and her family, and for the constant food, cleanliness, and comfort of his two dogs, two birds, and green-frog. No man should thus needlessly multiply his cares, who cannot keep servants to assist him in their employments. The instant bad effect in my poor friend, produced by every resumption of these energetic attentions, ascertains the cause of his malady. The nervous system has been overstrained. Alas! the composure and quiet you so benevolently enjoin, will never, I much fear, be submitted to in the necessary degree.

The French are every day bringing more and deeper disgraces upon their noble cause, by the cruel, intemperate, mean, and dreadful ferocity of their conduct; above all, by their insane suspicion and persecution of Fayette, the greatest and bravest man of their nation; but as to the gasconading invaders, I think of their attempts as I ever thought of them. They may sluice life away in rivers of blood, but it will be to no purpose respecting the restoration of monarchy in France. It is probable, that their deposed king will share the fate of our Charles. Who that is unprejudiced will say, that if he has secretly abetted the invaders, his coward duplicity does not deserve it? Though nothing can vindicate the French people

to honour and justice, in denying him the liberty of leaving the dominions he once swayed; in forging those fetters for him which they had broken for themselves; yet, since they were resolved to sacrifice the first principle of their system to mean, dishonest, though specious policy, he had, in wisdom and virtue, only to choose whether he would hazard his life, by a firm and manly refusal to relinquish his former monarchial claims; or, making a merit of necessity, to have accepted, and sincerely adhered to the rules of the new constitution. Surrounded by perils, he was sure to lose that life ignobly by his treachery, which would have been, at least, not inglorious-ly sacrificed by an assertion of his hereditary privileges.

I hope, however, that Mr Pitt will keep us out of the bloody Quixotism, in which so considerable a part of Europe has engaged. The lives and treasures of his subjects ought to be far dearer to our king, than the personal safety of his late faithless ally, who is now so dearly paying for his breach of treaty with us in our desperate contest with America. Beneath the recollection of that infidelity, we may surely without inhumanity, exclaim,

"What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba."

But I am afraid you have acquired a portion of the Quixotism I deprecate.—Adieu.

LETTER L.

Lady Gresley.

August 10, 1792.

Ah, dear Lady Gresley, most sincerely do I condole with you on the loss of excellent Mrs Bennet*. It was with a struck and aching heart that I learnt the lamented news from Mrs B. Proby. When I had the gratification of a few hours conversation with her at Worcester, last autumn, I pleased myself with observing an air of stability in her venerable frame, and in the energy of her voice and step, which promised an accession of yet many years. Ah! there is often, as in this instance, much beguiling flattery in the vital appearance which Nature bestows; and she is frequently kinder, as to duration, where she promises less.

* That lady had been, during many years, the intimate companion and friend of the illustrious author of Clarissa and Grandison.—S.

The vigour and clearness of Mrs Bennet's intellects were astonishing, at so advanced a period. She conversed at Worcester with Ciceronian eloquence and spirit. Alas! that the sun, whose setting rays were so bright and unclouded, should so soon set for ever! I find the beatification of that pure spirit was sudden, and therefore, I trust, not preceded by much corporal suffering. I also understand, from Mrs Proby, that a sudden death was her wish. That wish seems to me entirely consonant with the strength of her understanding, and the justness of her manner of thinking. They must surely have unworthy conceptions of the Deity, who can suppose that He, who knows what would have been our feelings, and increased regret for our past offences, had he allotted us a lingering translation, will punish us for not having that opportunity of augmented remorse, and multiplied intercession.

Amongst many pleasures, for which I am indebted to you, dear Lady Gresley, permit me to take this solemn occasion of thanking you for the opportunities your were so good to give me of conversing with Mrs Bennet. Dear to me, through life, will be the recollection of them. Wherever I have revered, wherever I have loved, my heart feels a sweet, though mournful, luxury,

in preserving the ideal presence of the actually for ever absent.

Within this month, the world has lost another of those few beings, whose virtues and abilities exalt human nature—Mr Falconer, the Mæcenas of Chester; the generous patron and warm friend of talents and worth; he who delighted to draw them from the shades of obscurity. Careless as he was of the tinsel-differences of rank and fortune, genius and virtue were ever the unfailing passports to his kind attentions, and hospitable board. In himself, "he was a scholar, and a ripe and good one." Strange, that the blood and the name of Falconer should ever have belonged to one who delighted to choose his companions from the ingenious and the amiable, rather than from the rich and great. As I am glad to have known Mrs Bennet, so am I that I knew Mr Falconer of Chester; who, though always the guest of a family who care not for me, never came to Lichfield since first we met, without honouring me with an hour's visit. That hour, in my calculation, ever rapidly flew;—so well did he know, with interest and improvement, to wing the passing time.

I am much concerned that you do not, by this time, begin to amend; and I extremely fear, that the news of Mrs Bennet's death, deeply affecting

your spirits, may yet farther injure your constitution. Sincerely wishing that it may not prove so, I remain your Ladyship's faithful friend and obedient servant.

LETTER LI.

DAVID SAMWELL, ESQ.

Sept. 13, 1792.

I admire the energy and resolution of the fair circumnavigatress *; but there is much inconsistency in the cold dislike with which you tell me she seems to look upon an undertaking, to whose retrospection the most thrilling delight seems inevitably attached. Corporal hardships and dangers, when past, even though unattended with any circumstance of credit or of glory, are grateful to remembrance, by the contrasting relish they give to the viands of plenty, and the couch of safe re-

* The lady's name is Murphy, a native of England, and the only woman in the world, now living, who ever sailed round it. She went out as companion to her friend, a captain's wife, since dead, who went out to Nootka in the London merchant ship ———.—*S.*

pose; but when they had led to manners so unlike our own, and so very interesting, it is hard to conceive, that the spirit which, for their sakes, had the greatness to brave certain difficulties, assured deprivations, and life-hazarding perils, should, having paid the price, be joyless over the purchase.

Readily will I grant you, that the great S. Johnson's poetic powers had not the eagle-pinion of Milton, Gray, or even of Collins. In the Fane of Apollo, there are many mansions. All I contend for amounts but to this,—that his writings are too rich in imagery, the very essence of poetry, to have been the product of any brain uninspired by the muses;—that they had tempered his imagination too finely, for the possibility that his want of justice could be involuntary to the lovely compositions, whose claims to celebration he *labours* to annihilate. Yet I should not say labours; for his envious wit had the lightning's power to wither excellence with a glance, in the estimation of those who cannot, judging for themselves, smile at the flashing sophistry, and,

> ——— "Shewing their laurel,
> Cry, 'sic evitabile fulmen!'"

I am glad you and Helen are become acquaint-

ed. She is an enthusiast in French liberty. Sincerely have I ever wished that it might maintain its dignity, and establish itself upon the broad basis of justice, never losing sight of her indispensable maxim, "Do unto others as thou would'st they should do unto thyself." But, alas! I see this nominal liberty debasing itself more and more into lawless licentiousness, and grow so sick of the ruinous anarchy into which it has plunged, that I begin to think the worst government better than a mob-subjected administration. Such are now the once boasted, once revered national assembly!

"The early and great error of the revolutionists was the sacrifice of the first principle of their system to coward policy, by the despotism exercised to the king and queen. They should have said to them—'Take your choice—here is our constitution; accept it sincerely; still be our monarchs, and learn to be our friends;—but, if you like not the terms, go your ways, our gates shall be open to you. If you are wise, as you go in peace, so you will remain. Your quiet exile is an happier state for yourselves, as well as for us, than your tyrannous government. Those who love the iron-curb of your power better than freedom, are, we trust, not many. If you gather them under your standard, and lead them against

us, we will meet you as our deadly foes; nor can we fear the event of the combat; but, scorning to be your slaves, we will not, by unjust and mean coercion, make you ours.' "

So speaking, and so acting, they had done virtuously; and then, I dare believe, that Louis XVI., wandering in distant realms, would have been as harmless to France as James II. was to England, after his abdication. But the force with which they detained their enslaved king, in some sort excuses his treachery; if indeed, it shall be shewn, that he practised it, though not to wisdom, yet perhaps to conscience. His sufferings excite, in a countless number of benevolent hearts, pity for him, and indignation against his oppressors. His injuries and his woes are much more formidable to the revolution than his liberated person could have been; and see how the anarchs are persecuting Fayette, the glory of their fraternity! Then, what think you of the twelve hundred professed assassins, and of the late direful massacre?

I feel no great reverence for kings; but, properly restrained, I believe it best they should exist, as the first link in that salutary chain which ought to bind a nation's various powers, and various orders, in one stable form of policy, that

shall submit neither to the tyrant's scourge, nor to the demagogue's embroilment.

But to descend from great subjects to little ones.—The London papers had no authority for saying that I was writing a novel. The design of framing such a composition never occurred to me; though I am well aware, that novels, and political tracts, are the only things generally read. If I could write like Richardson, I would turn novelist; but then my work would be too good to be popular;—for how is Richardson neglected? As it is, I have no inclination to stoop my talents with Ethelindas and Celestinas, to the frivolous taste of the times, and make them feel as one does in a room where the ceiling is too low to allow us to stand upright.

Adieu.—Suffer the length of my letters to attone for their seldomness—though perchance the inundation is a greater evil than the drought.

LETTER LII.

Mrs M. Powys.

Sept. 22, 1792.

Dear friend, I have passed this lowering and comfortless summer in a frame of mind congenial with its temperament. Anxious, alarmed, and often terrified by the obscure disease, as Dr Darwin terms it, of my valued friend, who is now gone to the Lancashire coast for the benefit of sea-bathing; but alas! the cruel storms have made the ocean continually scold him from her renovating bosom. Autumn generally comes on, after a churlish summer, with serene and recompensing smiles; but O! she has been, and yet remains frowning and violent. Never did I so warmly invoke her benignity, since, in the year 1770, my dear Honora sought the waters of Bristol.

Ah! on Tuesday evening, for the first time since he was four years old, did I see and converse with all that remains of Honora in this wide world. I was sitting alone at the harpsichord, when my servant, opening the door, said,

Madam, here is a young gentleman who wishes to see you. Immediately entered that dear youth, whose interesting countenance you so well know; but I had not the least idea who it was. I asked, after I had desired him to be seated, if I had ever had the pleasure of seeing him before. Hesitatingly, and with a pensive smile, he said—Yes—"Then my memory strangely fails me,—your name, if you please"—"Lovel Edgeworth."—What a new and impetuous sensation did I that instant feel!—Strong and tender affection rushing upon my heart for one whom, the preceding moment, I had considered as a stranger. With an involuntary emotion, I seized his hands, the tears starting into my eyes,—and I exclaimed, Good God! do I indeed see before me the only child of dear Honora.

When I had composed myself a little, I walked with him over the house, which had been the home, and she often called it the happy home, of his mother's infancy and youth. I shewed him those apartments in which she grew, she bloomed, and which yet seem so full of her. He appeared interested in examining them. I directed his attention to the paper profile, in miniature, of her, reduced by your hand, and to the print of Romney's Serena, which appears to me exactly what she was at sixteen. I did not shew him the

strikingly-like paper outline upon a larger scale, because it was in my bed-chamber. It is there, that it may be the last object I behold ere I sleep; and it is the companion of all my excursions.

Earnestly did my eye search for traces of his mother in his face and features. I found, or fancied I found some; but they do not amount to decided resemblance;—yet, how engaging his countenance!—I thought so before he announced himself. Then, what a touching sweetness in the tone of his voice!—How much of mind in every little word! but he does not look in health; and if he must not live, if he must follow his beauteous sister to an early grave, I shall regret this interview, which will increase my sorrow for an event which, without it, I should have mourned.

It was a short, short indulgence; the whole of his stay did not amount to half an hour. He went away, and part of my soul seemed to go with him.

What legions of fiends rise up in Paris!—how have they disgraced their originally noble cause! See what it is to break the links of subordination, that bind kingdoms as one common family!—What defiance of the laws; what tyranny; what anarchy; what misery is the result!

At length, my apprehensions, as well as yours, are awakened, that the diabolic spirits, who infest

our yet prosperous island, succeed in their endeavours to spread the poison of seditious and causeless discontent amidst our lower classes. "Equality"—"the majesty of the people." Dazzling, intoxicating sounds!—Yes, it is thus that the passions of the vulgar and ignorant are inflamed, till the hewers of wood, drawers of water, and tillers of soil, pant to be senators; and fine work they make with legislation!

Your description of Lymmington is certainly not very alluring. The muddy bed of a receding tide is one of the most disagreeable objects in nature.

I wonder not you were interested by the venerable ancientry of Lord Montague's seat; and I feel personally flattered by the resemblance which struck you in the picture you saw there of the unfortunate Queen Mary of Scotland. It is not the first time I have been told that I resemble the portraits of her. Mary Antoinette, now the rival of her woes, has, by this time, probably met an every-way similar fate.

Remember me to Miss Louisa Smith. It was very good in Miss Caroline to purpose calling upon me in her way through Lichfield. I should have been glad to have seen her. The seeds of worth and wisdom which you have sown in the minds of those young people, will, I trust, all be-

come admirable fruit as life's season advances. I am lately become intimate with a family related to that of Mr Pemberton, who married the eldest of your young friends. They tell me that she is remarkably domestic and amiable.—Farewell.

LETTER LIII.

Mr Saville.

Oct. 3, 1792.

I THANK you most sincerely for your letter, my long valued friend. One sweet passage in it affected me extremely, by the grateful and pious sensations it describes on your entering the house of God, after so long a banishment. You can hardly be more thankful than myself for the mercy which gives you back to his temple.

Indeed this is melancholy weather, and no present likelihood of fairer skies to exhale the damps from our drenched and injured harvests.

It gives me pleasure to learn from you, that Mr Cizos is in the midst of patrons and friends at Liverpool. I trust he will never more forsake

them, nor their kindness wax cold to him. Every situation to every person has some disagreeable circumstances. Even health and affluence are not exempt from their pressure; how then can talents and merit, to which niggard fortune has denied independence, hope to escape them? Here are no Abyssinian vales; and if there were, Johnson would persuade us that we should be tired of their unalloyed delights—but he was a gloomy philosopher, who carried his hell within him, and judged others by the dark criterion of his own discontent. None who have strong affections, and an ardour after the pursuits of knowledge and science, could be tired of cloudless and sorrowless scenes, in which they might gratify their hearts, and cultivate their understandings;—but since our world has not many Abyssinian features, it is wise to consider the kindness of a few good hearts towards us, as recompensing the much of illiberality which abounds in all society, and pretty equally in every place.

I have been requested, by the friends of Mrs Bennet, to write her epitaph. You know my averseness, indeed my resolve, not to tread that beaten and exhausted track of composition, upon the mere consideration of worth and talents, unless there has been something appropriate in the character or destiny of the deceased. Mrs Ben-

net's long intercourse and friendship with our late illustrious Richardson, gave ground of appropriation. Ninon L'Enclos elegantly says to St Evremond, in one of her letters: "I made a friendship with you to embellish my epitaph." I shall like, when you return, to consult you upon my attempt to detain the eye of the ingenious passengers over the tomb-stone of Mrs Bennet.

All the horror you describe, I constantly feel at plunging into a cold bath, especially if it is walled round, while I also plunge into the wide ocean without terror. I wish the gloomy baths of Liverpool may be as restorative to your amending health, as the roaring waters of Blackpool. I admire the title you give that shore, as flat and unvaried, "Monotony Bay,"—it is well named. Adieu!

LETTER LIV.

JOSIAH WEDGEWOOD, ESQ.

Oct. 30, 1792.

DEAR SIR,—My thanks for your obliging present had been earlier, but for the intervention of

perpetual engagements. I value every token of Mr Wedgewood's remembrance. They are doubly prized; for their intrinsic beauty, and from my long esteem for the virtues of the donor.

It delights me to find, that you will be shewn to succeeding ages, illumined by the hand of Darwin, with the most brilliant rays of poetic light, as the inventive cultivator of art, and as the friend of liberty

Mr Saville, whose talents and benevolence are worthy the friendship of the liberal and ingenious, speaks to me with warm pleasure of his reception in those hospitable scenes, where the forms of "uncopied beauty, and ideal grace," are multiplied and immortalized.

I remain, with the highest respect, dear Sir, your obliged friend and servant.

* In allusion to Mr Wedgewood's beautiful medallions, which so powerfully plead to the passions, through the eye, against our African slave-trade.—*S.*

LETTER LV.

Mrs Hayley.

Nov. 2, 1792.

I am indebted to dear Mrs Hayley's obliging punctuality for a kind letter—a charming trio, and a tender air, which, first heard through the sweet notes of her voice, will always present me with her image.

Pleasing Mrs Archdale does not keep her promises so accurately. Giovanni's charming song from Collin's Ode to the Passions, has not yet found its plighted way to Lichfield.

Soreness on the foot is more teazing than almost on any other part of the body, since it more impedes our free-agency. I often groan under similar despotism, and am glad to hear your captivity is not likely to be long.

Mr Saville and his daughter came home on Sunday seven-night, lingering a few days, on their return, in the gay Etrurian regions, which Mr Wedgewood's hospitable kindness made to them as much the regions of friendship, as of ingenious and beautiful art. Mr Saville's fierce cough soft-

ened on the journey. He seems considerably amended by sea-bathing, notwithstanding the malignant influence of the Liverpool air, tainted by epidemic disease. Mrs Smith complains much, and looks ill—nor could be prevailed upon to join a musical party at my house the week she came home—but her father graced it with his animated conversation, and charming songs. The company congratulated, with the most lively pleasure, his capacity to oblige us. Cold, indeed, must be the hearts in whom virtues like his have not created an interest in his life. The remains of the influenza had somewhat impaired the silver clearness of his voice;—but last Sunday, in the church, it was thought as fine as ever. By previous engagement, I passed that day at Sir Robert Lawley's, and thus lost, not only the first anthem graced, after so long a time, by the voice of Saville, but the pleasure of seeing Dr Darwin, who was so obliging to call upon me that evening.

I have not yet heard, with its parts, the sublime and beauteous glee you sent me, "Awake Æolian lyre;" but Mr Saville has given me a clear idea of the design, of the leading air, and of the subordinate harmonies. He promises me to try to persuade his daughter to learn it;—but, enthusiast as she knows I am in the enchanting

powers of her voice, I never had interest with her to induce her acquiring any song to oblige me;—on the contrary, my requests seem to prejudice her against them;—so I must conceal from her my longing about this glee, lest, by expressing it, I frustrate my own wish. O! human nature, how often is thy influence wayward and perverse! Few know the value of warm friendship, even when their pleasing talents have inspired it.

When I lost my engaging guests, vanished was the magnetism that drew hither the gay, the brilliant Stephen Panting, and his agreeable brother. A single call is all I have seen of either since I saw you.

I delivered your message to dear Lady Gresley. She replied—"Mrs Hayley is very obliging—and she is polite, and seems engaging. I should like to have seen more of her." The merry round face of her friend, Mrs Price, promised good humour; but I have found much more in that lady,—interest and intelligence. She has a feeling heart, and a cultivated understanding, alive, from both those sources of good taste, to every emanation of genius. I have passed much of the time, which has intervened since you and I separated, in reading and conversing with Lady Gresley and Mrs Price.

My solitary hours have been few. I devoted some of them to a third perusal of Mrs Inchbald's simple story; deluging its animated, pathetic, and finely discriminating pages with those tears which it is luxury to shed. I who, by the works of Richardson, have had my taste set so high in that line of writing, as seldom to meet with a novel which I can even endure to read, could read the Simple Story, without satiety, every year of my life. Not that it is wholly faultless—but its nice developement of the human heart, and striking originality of manner in narration, as well as of character and of incident, entitle it to a high place amongst the works of imagination. 'I am astonished that its fame has not reached you with force sufficiently impressive to excite your curiosity—for surely it would be highly gratified.

I remember you said, on your late visit here, when I was praising the excellence of this novel, that you felt no inclination to read it; but I hope, for your amusement's sake, if amusement is not too poor a word for the fascination of its pages, that somebody, in whose judgment of fine writing you have confidence, will awaken the desire of exploring its beauties.

Mr Dewes and Mrs Port were with me last week. The former is rich in the capacity of giv-

ing wings to time. He brought with him a Mr Caldacet, a counsellor;—a celebrated classic scholar, it seems, who translates Greek poetry;—but to the excellence of English verse he is dully fastidious, for he speaks with just such contempt of Dr Darwin's exquisite Botanic Garden, as Mr Mundy's learned friend did of the matchless odes of Gray. Whip me such critics round Parnassus, O! ye muses! Adieu!

LETTER LVI.

H. F. Cary, Esq.

Nov. 13, 1792.

Yes, dear Cary, I confess that the superstitions of Godstow Abbey deserve poetic consecration—but it is from your hand that they peculiarly ask it. Your sensibility feels them sacred, and on your imagination glows every harmonizing grace of the surrounding scenery. Make these supernatural credulities, and their lovely landscape, the subject of a Latin poem to please the college pedants;—and when it has attained that end, give it an English dress to charm people of just taste.

In the opinion of all such in this nation, learned, and unlearned, I venture to assert, that no dress so well becomes the effusions of fancy.

For myself, I have determined not to attempt any new theme, till I have prepared my miscellany for the press—a task for which I cannot obtain the requisite leisure.

Do you know that your justly celebrated public orator, the boast of your university, whose own Lewesdon Hill is one of the brightest gems of our local poetry,—do you know that he is of morbid sensibility to the brilliant beauties of the Botanic Garden?

The great error which produces such strange inconceiveable injustice in fine poets to each other, is a selfish desire, a weak, because an impossible, attempt to confine all claim to poetic excellence, within the pale of that style and manner in which themselves excel; as if, as Mr Hayley admirably observes,—as if

> "The countless forms of beauty were but one."

Hayley is nobly superior to this lamentable tenaciousness, so highly injurious to the common cause, and which is at once the sneer and the triumph of those who wish to decry and to degrade the science itself.

Since he commenced poet professed, Darwin is become notoriously guilty of the narrow-souled jealousy. Till then he was a warm admirer and generous encomiast of poetic effluence, in whatever form it might appear—now he dislikes odes—now he cannot endure sonnets—now he will not read blank verse—all this because the Botanic Garden is in the couplet measure—and because it is everywhere picture, and nothing but picture, sentiment and passion are, according to his decision, out of the province of the muses, and are "best exprest in prose."

Thus, while he is insensible to the coy, the chaste, the touching, or even to the energetic graces of simpler composition, too many of its votaries and admirers walk, like Mr Crowe, through Darwin's splendid gallery, blind to the Raphaelian grace and Rubenic glow of its portraits, its groups, and its landscapes.

LETTER LVII.

Mrs Stokes.

Nov. 15, 1792.

I am anxious, dear friend, to hear of your health, and long for glad tidings of your returning peace. Surely time, the universal assuager, softens what I fear it will never entirely subdue.

Last night I returned out of Shropshire, after a week's visit to Prior's Lea, basking beneath the grasp of the influenza. Detaining me from the dear Cecilian concert, it adds mortification to disease—especially as poor Giovanni purposes singing a song there, after his long abstinence from public singing.

I had promised to accompany Mr Dewes and his sister, Mrs Port, to Wellsburn, on their return out of Derbyshire, the 23d instant—but I fear the not being well enough to travel so soon. I must, however, seize the first return of health for the performance of my promise, delayed through the lapse of several years. Some of the happiest hours of my life were, on my return from Wellsburn, that mansion of friendship, science, learn-

ing, and taste, in January 1786. My dearest father had retired to rest—but he heard me open the hall-door, and, hoping it was his own Nancy, as he said, rang his bell. When I flew to his bed-side, the tender joy with which he received me, warmed and delighted my inmost heart. Though faded, the light of intellect was not then extinguished, and his affection for me had never been more fervent.

No such thrilling felicity now awaits my entrance, after absence, within these walls. Those dear, those sacred pleasures are past away—never, alas! in this life, to return to me.

But all sense of delight is not extinguished. This heart of mine can yet exult and glow in the prosperity of those I love, or whom I have ever loved; and I have news to tell you, in which you will, equally with myself, rejoice. It met me in a letter from Mr Whalley, on my return home last night. After all the rashness of Miss ——'s unfounded trust in a dissipated brother; when it had, as you learnt from my last letter, reduced her to the dreariest prospect of want and dependence; when that delusive hope of matrimonial-establishment, which had led her into such a dangerous plan of expence, was vanished amid the gloom of descended penury, a miraculously fortunate reality of that sort intervenes, and snatches

her from the overwhelming darkness, to competence, to liberal competence, and to permanent peace.

For this she is indebted to a very old acquaintance—by birth a gentleman, whose situation, through his youth, had been unsettled, and his finances scanty. Some five years since, he was appointed master of the ceremonies at ————. I saw him the summer before last; and, as I guess, his age is about forty-five—his figure tall and genteel, his face plain. He is allowed to be a man of sense and taste, but with laughable oddities, both of temper and understanding; yet of much exterior politeness, and of great goodness of heart. Ten years ago Miss ——— and he were much together at Mr Whalley's—but in the interim they have not met, and he was never suspected of glancing towards the fair Sophia, with an eye of aspiring affection, or even marked admiration.

For the aim and end of this prelude, I shall quote Mr Whalley's letter:

" My friend —— inquiring about Miss —— a few weeks ago, I related to him her hapless situation. He paused a few moments, and then said, ' Would to God she would accept of me as a comforter and protector, and command the little independence it is in my power to give her.' On

this more than hint I spoke to her, business calling me town. After much conversation, and some hesitation, she consented to hear and see, though she would not bind herself to accept the noble-minded being who wooed her, for the first time, in the midst of want and distress. They had not met for near ten years: and, what is rarely the case, she found him, at their interview, full as agreeable in his person, and infinitely more so in his mind, than she had ever known him. All his oddities and eccentricities seemed done away by time, good sense, and the constant friction of good company; so that all his merits struck her with double force. Every thing is settled; his generous friend, Mrs ———, highly approves his choice—a very material point. The bride-elect comes down to us next week, and before Christmas I am to bless their union at the altar. Mrs ——— has a quantity of elegant furniture, china, plate, and linen, and their income will be a clear 500l. per annum, with fair promise of yearly increase from the great increase of buildings about the springs, where he is universally beloved and esteemed."

You will not wonder, dear Mrs Stokes, that I have thought of little else than this welcome, this unlooked for good news, since I heard it. May the sunshine of this union be permanent!—a wish

to which, I am sure, you will breathe a very sincere amen!

LETTER LVIII.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY.

Nov. 23, 1792.

I CANNOT refrain from expressing, in the first possible instant, the concern and the joy your letter has given me. The interval since you wrote to me had appeared very long; but, as business and engagements had not unfrequently produced from your pen as enduring a silence, it did not inspire painful presentiment, which your late illness would but too well have verified. That a life so valuable should have been in imminent peril by the conflict with two diseases, which demanded opposite treatment, and which cost you so much pain, my very heart deplores; yet am I comforted to learn, that all the danger, and most of the pains are past away. And now let me speak to you of the exquisite pleasure I feel from the latter part of your epistle; poor Sophia's more than fortunate, her blessed transition from the depres-

sing sorrows, the cruel mortifications of dependence to the heart-felt peace of genteel, easy, nay, liberal competence, beneath the roof, and in the protection of one of the most generous of men. It is long since any incident has cast such an exhilarating glow over my spirit. Bodily indisposition, from the severe influenza, cannot counteract its glad impression. Though more fit to be in my bed, I took a chair to Lady Gresley's, for the delight of communicating to her intelligence which I knew would be thrice welcome, for she admires Sophia; her warm heart is truly interested in the welfare of her favourites. With me had she mourned Sophia's darkened prospects, and with me has she felt the most glad exultation that their clouds thus unexpectedly, thus brightly roll away. Sophia's heart is too good, even for an instant to forget how highly she is obliged; how few there are, who, in homage to her talents, her charms, and her misfortunes, would have felt, or, feeling, have ventured to indulge, an impulse so disinterested.

See, my friend, see how terminates that combined invasion of the German powers, which you were so sure would be irresistible;—but to what dire, what wanton excess is tyranny carried in that wretched country, beneath the specious name

of liberty! Benevolence turns, loathing, from the prostituted sound.

The event of the invasion has but too well justified my predictions; but, in their accomplishment, I begin to apprehend danger to our state, then unthought of. I do not like the open triumph avowed by numbers, over what they term the resistless arms of freedom. I fear it has covert allusion to the fancied eligibility of similar anarchy here. Insane dreamers! How deplorable, how inconceivable is it, that not only the ignorant, misguided, dazzled multitude, for whom the levelling system has natural attraction, but men of talents and affluence, who must perceive, while they enjoy the blessings of that subordinate government, congenial to all the dispositions of Providence, all the economy of nature—that such should wish to kindle the devouring flames of sedition in this prosperous, this happy land; to throw from its equipoise that vast body, whose overwhelming momentum they cannot hope to govern! O what madness!

Adieu! You and Mrs W. purpose, I trust, to visit Lichfield next summer, for I know that friendship will induce you both willingly to forego the elegant luxuries of your own board, for the plain unvaried viands of mine.

LETTER LIX.

To Mr Saville.

Wellsburn, Dec. 7, 1792.

In this interesting* scene of friendship, literature, and the arts, I have been introduced to that intellectual luminary, Dr Parr, and to the celebrated hortus siccus of Mrs Delany, contained in ten immense folios, each enriched with an hundred floral plants, representing, in cut paper, of infinitely various dyes, the finest flowers of our own, and every other climate, from the best specimens that the field, the garden, the greenhouse, and the conservatory could furnish; and with a fidelity and vividness of colouring, which shames the needle and the pencil. The moss, the films, the farina, every, the minutest part, is represented with matchless delicacy. It was at the age of seventy-five that this prodigy of female genius invented her art, and gave it that last perfection which makes imitation hopeless. Always a fine painter, and not

* The seat of Court Dewes, Esq. near Stratford-upon-Avon.—*S.*

ignorant of the arts of chemistry, she herself dyed her papers from whence the new creation arose. Of this astonishing work Dr Darwin has given a most erroneous description in his splendid poem. He ought not to have taken such a liberty. It represents Mrs Delany as a mere artificial flower-maker, using wires and wax, and moss, &c.; though writing-paper was her sole material—her scissars her only implement. The former, previously coloured by herself, in complete shades of every tint, was never retouched by the pencil after the flower was cut out; nor did she ever make a drawing; but, as her specimen lay before her, she cut from the eye. The easy floating grace of the stalks, the happiness with which the flower or flowers, their leaves and buds, are disposed upon those stalks, is exquisite; while the degree of real relief which they possess, besides that which arises from the skilful deception produced by light and shade, has a richness and natural effect, which the finest pencil cannot hope to attain. What a lesson of exertion does the invention and completion of such a work, after seventy-five, give to that hopeless languor, which people are so prone to indulge in the decline of life?

When I had the honour of a visit from Dr Parr, he staid two days and nights at Wellsburn. I was prepared to expect extraordinary colloquial powers,

but they exceeded every description I had received of them. He is styled the Johnson of the present day. In strength of thought, in promptness and plenteousness of allusion; in wit and humour, in that high-coloured eloquence which results from poetic imagination—there is a very striking similarity to the departed despot. That, when irritated, he can chastise with the same overwhelming force, I can believe; but unprovoked, Dr Parr is wholly free from the caustic acrimony of that splenetic being. Benign rays of ingenuous urbanity dart in his smile, and from beneath the sable shade of his large and masking eyebrows, and from the fine orbs they overhang. The characters he draws of distinguished people, and of such of his friends, whose talents, though not yet emerged, are considerable, are given with a free, discriminating, and masterly power, and with general independence of party prejudices. If he throws into deepest shade the vices of those, whose hearts he thinks corrupt, his spirit luxuriates in placing the virtues and abilities of those he esteems in the fairest and fullest lights; a gratification which the gloomy Johnson seldom, if ever, knew.

Dr Parr is accused of egotism; but if he often talks of himself, all he says on that, as on every other theme, interests the attention, and charms

the fancy. It is surely the dull and the envious only who deem his frankness vanity. Great minds must feel, and have a right to avow their sense of the high ground on which they stand. Who, that has a soul, but is gratified by Milton's avowals of this kind, when, in the civil wars, exhorting the soldier to spare his dwelling, the poet declares his power to requite the clemency; to spread the name of him who shewed it over seas and lands;

"In every clime the sun's bright circle warms."

Dr Parr is a warm whig, loves our constitution, and ardently wishes its preservation; but he says malignant and able spirits are at work to overthrow it, and that with their efforts a fatal train of causes co-operate.

I saw him depart, with much regret, though his morning, noon, and evening pipe involved us in clouds of tobacco while he staid, but they were gilded by perpetual vollies of genius and wit.

Adieu! It delights me that you have been so tolerably well since I left the spiral precincts.

LETTER LX.

MRS SIMMONS, Manchester.

Dec. 25, 1792.

MY dear Mrs Simmons,—I take an early opportunity, on my return out of Warwickshire, to congratulate yourself and Mr Simmons on a marriage, which, I sincerely wish and hope, may prove a source of lasting happiness to you both, unmolested, and unallayed by private or public calamity.

The venom of sedition has been too industriously diffused through your town. May reason, may virtue, may gratitude for constitutional protection, flourishing commerce, and national glory, soon expel it, and unanimously inspire the inhabitants of Manchester with as true an attachment to this country and its government, as I am assured you and Mr Simmons feel for each other!

Miss Remmington gave me satisfaction, by imparting the pleasing account your sister had given her of Mr Simmons's numerous and agreeable friends. Animated and intelligent society inspirits the sweetness of domestic peace.

I thank you for your obliging remembrance of me, by a bridal token, and, with compliments to Mr Simmons, and love to Miss Hinckley, I remain, dear Madam, your sincere friend, and obedient servant.

I have just seen Mrs Hinckley, who sends her love to you both, or rather to all three.

LETTER LXI.

COLONEL DOWDESWELL.

Jan. 3, 1793.

YOUR obliging present was extremely acceptable. The * transmigrating gentry of dusky pinion are great strangers here.

I am sure you rejoice with me to find so many respectable members of opposition ardently, wisely, and virtuously supporting ministry at this critical juncture—to see true patriotism breaking out, like the sun, from beneath the clouds of party and prejudice, pervading and illuminating every part of the nation, and forcing the dark and

* Woodcocks.

shrinking spirits of sedition and anarchy to hide their horrid heads.

It is not to the credit of Mr Fox that he stands almost alone,

> " A column in the melancholy waste."

Lonely, waste, and melancholy be ever the situation of those who refuse their assistance to the preservation of their country!

But, O! the hapless Louis!—more truly great beneath the barbarous tyranny he suffers, than amidst the highest splendours of that throne, from which freedom had ever been banished, not by him, but by its own pernicious constitution. If the fierce banditti, who have disgraced the fair name of liberty, should finally destroy that unfortunate monarch, whom they have long thus cowardly, thus basely persecuted, his blood

> " Shall, like the sacrificing Abel's, cry,
> E'en from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
> To Heaven, for justice, and rough chastisement."

Adieu, Sir! may you, and Mr and Mrs M. see many returning years, on which neither private nor public calamity shall lower.

LETTER LXII.

Miss Helen Williams, at Paris.

January 17, 1793.

Ah! my dear Miss Williams, I am truly sorry for the sad state of your health, and for the inevitable affliction of your gentle spirit. Often do I regret that you left our yet, and, I trust, long to continue, happy country, for the regions of anarchy, tumult, and murder.

See what it is to destroy the chain of subordination, which binds the various orders of national society in one common form of polity; that gradatory junction, which can alone give vigour and effect to the laws, extent and circulation to commerce, and create mutual love, and mutual dependence, amid the various ranks of men. It lays those wholesome and necessary restraints upon the headstrong and undiscerning passions of the vulgar, which form their best and truest liberty; and without which, as the rash experiment in France evinces, all is ferocious contest, that appals the spirit, and withers the nerves of legislation.

O! that France had possessed the wisdom of knowing where to stop, and the virtue to scorn a tyrannous revenge!—that, emerging from the gloom of oppression, and the baseness of servility, she had not rushed into the yet worse extreme of wild levelling!—that she had not been misled by that specious, that mischievous sophist, whose absurd and impossible system of equality seeks to kindle the fatal flame of selfish ambition in every heart. Beneath the prostituted name of freedom, it abandons all mankind to the dominion of their own fierce desires; tyrants, under whose scourge and injustice, the sum of public misery is greater far than it was even in that fallen monarchy, which, by hereditary claims, not by the vices of the king, was corrupt and despotic, to an excess which demanded a brave resistance.

But the different talents and dispositions of men, inherent and acquired; the comfort, protection, and prosperity of civilized society; the dispensations of providence in the vegetable, animal, and rational universe; the silent lessons of natural religion, and the precepts of revelation, are all the reverse of Paine's equalizing creed, which has transformed an amiable and sweet-tempered people, whose first liberation was not only justifiable but noble; has transformed them into a dire banditti, spurning every legal restraint.

Behold them Bastilling the mildest and most indulgent monarch that ever sat upon their throne; forging, in their demoniac wish of his destruction, those incredible treasons, which he had neither the courage to plan, nor, watched as he was, the power to negotiate; confiscating the property, and dooming to destitute banishment, those who had fled from the scenes of sanguinary tumult, and unpunished murder; where none could be sure that he, or she, might not prove the next victim; bullying and stigmatizing, with the most insolent contempt, every state, where the happier principles of subordinate government unite a people as one family!—destroying the freedom of their own press!—avenging, by proscription, all conversation which presumes to censure their fierce democratic system!—menacing, with brutal indecency, in their conventional assembly, the few, *few* pleaders for mercy, who, conscious that their lives must probably expiate the generous attempt, deserve statues to their memories.

This is the nation to which the amiable, the benevolent Helen Williams has rashly committed herself:—where her golden lyre must not be strung, at least to gentle themes:—where the sweet creations of her fancy must not arise, or, arising, must be neglected:—whose very life, if she is sus-

pected of pitying the greatly unfortunate, may even be marked out for the dagger of the assassin.

Warned by the ingratitude of the bloody democracy to their primal deliverer, the brave Fayette, O! return, while yet you may, to your native country, which has fostered your talents, and enrolled your fame. In spite of the desperate incendiaries, who infest her cities, and seek to plunge her into the calamities of France, I trust she has sanity enough to profit by saving warning, instead of following ruinous example; to maintain stedfastly her wise subordinations; to shun the exchange of real freedom, the offspring of salutary restraint, for that nominal liberty which renders every man the slave of his own depraved desires; that, in the body-politic, enables the feet to usurp the place of the head, transforming manual artificers and rude peasants into statesmen; feeding their ambition at the price of their peace, to the ruin of commerce, and the fatal neglect of agriculture. How little can military victories avail to recompence such evils?

The fire which led the French to the brink of that chaos into which they are fallen, you yet, my dear friend, call the rising sun of liberty. So I deemed it once, nay long, and, as such,* publickly

* See a sonnet on the French Revolution in the Gentleman's Magazine for August 1789.—*S.*

and voluntarily hailed its dawn with the best powers of my imagination, and of my heart; but, to my great regret, it proves

" A meteor, flaming lawless through the void,"

Ominous of spreading strife and misery.

You tell me that the court treasons rendered the massacres of the 10th of August necessary. None of those imputed treasons are proved. They never wore the semblance of probability.—The accusers are the judges. Suborned witnesses and forged papers are easily procured, where no one dares, perhaps even wishes, to detect their fallacy.

All Europe knows, that, instead of the free choice which France ought to have given her king, that of accepting the new constitution, or of living as a private citizen, or of quitting the French territories, he has, from the first hour of the revolution, been a prisoner, with a sword at his throat. I always condemned that tyrannous coercion as a deep stain upon the glories of the revolution, before they became finally tarnished by the worst of crimes. That coercion ought early to have convinced us, that nothing genuinely great and good was to be expected from synods, capable of sacrificing, to narrow-hearted and cruel

policy, the very spirit and vital principles of that freedom, whose disciples they professed themselves.

Unhappy, injured Louis! all the crimes thou hast practised against the new state were, first, the exercise of that dissentient power with which it had itself invested thee; and next, the calling upon thy devoted guards to repel the tumult levelled at thy life. For doing their duty, they were butchered in thy sight; and, for the natural desire of self-preservation, thou art arraigned before the vengeful and infamous tribunal of mock-justice.

These are the treasons which induce thy cruel country to seek thy life. Perhaps even now, the murderous stroke has descended, and the measure of democratic oppression is full. But thy mild and mercy-loving temper, and the patient dignity with which thou hast borne thy injuries,

> "Will plead, like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of thy taking off;"

Or of that barbarous, lonely, and life-long imprisonment, which some of thy persecutors have advised, as a more politic revenge on thy unreal guilt, than the bow-string, the dagger, or the axe.

My dear friend, you confess the turpitude of the September massacres, but allege that they were perpetrated by three wretches, more dire and infamous than the Roman Triumvirate, with about fifty more, acting as their instruments in that work of death; that a general consternation had gone forth, no one knowing how far the plan of murder extended; but that those villains have not yet been brought to justice, proves that Roland spoke truth, when he asserted to the national convention, that their laws were in the sleep of death. Wretched, wretched constitution, against which that dreadful charge is truly urged!

> "Then shall insatiate tyranny range on,
> Till each man drop by lottery."

Fly, my dear Helen, that land of carnage!—from the influence of that equalizing system, which, instead of diffusing universal love, content, and happiness, lifts every man's hand against his brother!

Politics are almost as much the general theme here as with you. The restless ambition of our sectaries; the desperation of our spendthrifts and gamesters; the arrogant theories of empiric philosophers, who love speculative system much better than experienced policy; these dangerous propensities were beginning to diffuse, with alarm-

ing success, the venom of ungrateful and rebellious sedition amongst the easily-dazzled vulgar. But I trust the spirited and timely exertion of our legislators, and the public reasons of true wisdom, have thoroughly awakened our populace to their real interest. Never do I remember such an universal glow of loyalty, such a grateful and fervent sense of the blessings of our balanced government, as seem now to pervade all the orders of British society.

The frailty of human nature considered, we have no more right to expect perfection in governments than from individuals. In every person, in all institutions, much of error will be found intermingled with the purest virtue. The preponderance of good, which is declared to be enough for Heaven, is surely enough for us; but in democracies, the preponderance of evil is inevitable. Incessant struggle, never-ending tumult, fantastic giddy change, edicts written on sand, and hopes built on morasses—*these* are the effects of their radical instability. May England be preserved from the dire experiment!

Adieu, my dear friend!—Love and respect your country half as well as I love and respect you; and I trust we shall soon cease to view you in a state of cold alienation, and of impending danger.

LETTER LXIII.

Mr H. Cary, of Christ College.

March 9, 1793.

I must, dear Cary, consider your pleaded inability to make a good local poem out of the Rosamondian superstitions yet prevailing at Godstow, as a mere excuse of indolence. Want of leisure is another affair; and if your time is employed to better purposes of future fame, or prosperity, my friendship should repress the wish of my imagination.

I do not controvert the fact, that poets are too seldom to be trusted concerning the value of each other's compositions; but you and I differed as to the causes which rendered them, I will not say incompetent, but unfair judges. The heart! the heart! my dear Cary; if that was right,—did no unworthy jealousy, no mean selfish desire of confining excellence to that line of writing in which themselves excel, lurk there, "to twist opinions in contempt of justice,"—the prose-men's sensibility of beauty, and perceptions of defect, could

stand on no ground of competition with that of the bards.

Darwin is a great system-monger, and has certainly taken up an erroneous one concerning the constituent essentials of fine poetry, since he asserts that every thing is prose which is not picture;—a system which has destroyed his taste for simplicity, and induced him to be much too profuse of ornament. Yet surely you say wonderfully too little for his highly ingenious poem, in telling me, that you admire his "little pictures, tied together with festoons of ribbands," as, in his preface, with affected modesty, he calls that splendid gallery, where we often find the strength and force of Michael Angelo, as well as the softness of Raphael, and the tints of Titian.

Mr Hayley, after whose employments you inquire, has been lately engaged in writing the life of Milton. Not having heard from him since the execrable French completed the measure of their bloody tyrannies by the murder of the most mild and merciful monarch they ever had, I should not wonder if he withholds his work from the public eye at present. I suspect and fear that his bias towards democratic principles appear too strongly in that work, not to expose it to an ungracious reception, now that generous indignation is almost universally, would to God it were

wholly prevalent, against the guilt and misery they have produced in France.

You justly deplore the present apathy of public taste to Mr Hayley's just claims; yet I think a little mistake concerning the nature and bias of his own talents, has co-operated with that coldness to destroy the ardour with which his poetic efforts were once received. It appears to me that Mr Hayley's genius is of the same class with that of Pope. Pope did not attempt tragedy; and, had he attempted it, would not probably have produced dramatic compositions of equal merit with his other poems. So it proved with the dear bard in his Lord Russell and Marcella. The sentiments of the first are pleasing, natural, and pathetic, but the style wants spirit and variety. The second is so disgusting in its plot, that it was never likely to please. If any of the critical friends he consulted flattered him on the subject of those tragedies, they injured him. I was not of the number, and contented myself with reserving my ingenious praise for his charming comedies in rhyme, which, though they may not do well in representation, are, in the closet, as brilliant as they are original. Unwarned by the unpopularity of Lord Russell and Marcella, he wrote another tragedy, and pushed its fate on the stage. You know the event. A disgraced play is one of

the most fatal blights the respectability of a living author, in the eyes of the multitude, can receive; but future ages will either not know the circumstance, or, knowing, disregard it. You say the Triumphs of Temper ensure immortality to Mr Hayley's fame; but surely, if that exquisite sportive production of a rich and luxuriant imagination had never been written, his beautiful Epistles on Painting, and, far above even them, his Essays on Epic Poetry, together with that fine Ode to Howard, will be considered as amongst the first Delphic ornaments of the eighteenth century. Apropos of odes, I am delighted with the Aboriginal Odes. In my estimation, the light of genius shines with tenfold force in them, compared to the author's first poem in couplets, the Aboriginal Britons—though that will, I am sensible, much more generally please. Lyric composition, of genuine excellence, is not only out of the sphere of the common reader, but even of those who may be interested and pleased with a pleasing poem in ten or eight feet verse, or in the elegiac stanza, or in the lighter quatrain—but sublime odes are, even to such, like those stars—

> "That, plac'd beyond a certain height,
> Give mortals neither heat nor light."

The multitude, however, may, in time, be talked into applauding lyric excellence, when the suffrages of men of genius, liberal enough warmly to celebrate what they feel deserves celebration, shall accumulate, and form a mass of fame, to which the variety of superficial readers, and of those of bounded taste, will induce them to add, rather than, by fruitlessly attempting to diminish it, disgrace themselves. Such, at least, was the inevitable destiny of fine odes; such it will again unquestionably be, if the idle sneers of Johnson, on that line of poetry, shall fall into the contempt they deserve; but if they continue to be generally thought oracular, in vain, for his future glory, shall the bard strike the lyre of Pindar and of Gray, with congenial happiness.—With congenial happiness, surely, has Mr Richards struck it, especially in the second ode, the Captivity of Caractacus. The first has fine passages; but resembling, somewhat too nearly, the Alexander's Feast, and the Welch Bard, it has less originality than its younger brother.

This is a long letter from such an invalid as myself. I have been much out of health lately, and have reason, I think, to apprehend that the vital props are giving way! Adieu!

LETTER LXIV.

MRS STOKES.

April 25, 1793.

NEVER did I know what it was to be so ill as since I last wrote to you. My sensations taught me to apprehend the slow accumulation of water in my brain. I am yet far from being well, though my disease, whatever it is, has been wonderfully abated by the course of medicines prescribed by Dr Darwin and Dr Jones in consultation:

> " Of foes intestine, what a numerous band
> Against this little throb of life conspire!
> But science can elude their fatal ire
> Awhile, and turn aside death's levelled dart,
> Soothe the fierce pang, allay the fever's fire,
> And brace the nerves once more, and cheer the heart,
> And yet a few sweet days and balmy nights impart."

There is no being silent to the contents of your last on political themes; yet it is with reluctance that I enter upon the lists with one to whom my sentiments have hitherto been singularly congenial

on every material subject. Once they were in unison respecting the conduct of the French, and the eligibility of parliamentary reform in this country; but the mischiefs of individual representation are fully demonstrated by the guilty, the ruinous anarchy into which it has plunged our unfortunate neighbours. We are now, however unwillingly, taught by experience, that, through the natural depravity of human nature, people of property, who have a considerable stake in their country, are, in general, the only real patriots—that they alone can be safely entrusted with the management of its interests. The French shew us the romantic folly of expecting patriotism from the ignorant, the originally indigent, or the desperate, who have become indigent by vice and profusion. These classes form a large majority in every populous state; but, in general, all such, with men like Mr F. and Mr S. for their leaders, care not what becomes of that to which they belong. The two former classes do not foresee the evils, and those of the latter will not allow themselves to reflect what accumulated wretchedness must ensue from the enlarged power to do mischief, granted to those passions which had robbed their own private life of competence and peace.

It is by the protecting influence of represented

property, extending to the unpropertied, and jealously guarding from innovation that government, by which Britain is at this hour the happiest nation in Europe; it is by that influence that we are all, of every rank and every faith, preserved from real oppression, from every political evil of magnitude; and, above all, from what the French evince to be the worst of misfortunes, lawless licentiousness, profaning the name of liberty.

That nation also proves to us the bad consequence of destroying the union between national politics and national religion. To all who, after its dire example, yet seek to abolish the tests which maintain that union, wisdom cries out aloud, beware!—and it well becomes the honour, the probity, the prudence of this country's political saviour, Pitt, not to suffer the awful warning to be given in vain. Beneath his momentous trust, it is not for him, as an honest man, obstinately to persist in what he might once think expedient, even though he had declared a design to bring it forward, now that the danger of innovation is thus horridly demonstrated. Our dissenters have no grievances of a thousandth part the magnitude of those to which the grant of their demands would expose themselves, amidst the general confusion and ruin which it would, almost to certainty, eventually produce. They are not

persecuted, or even impeded, in the exercise of their religious duties; their persons, their property, share the general protection; while the restraints laid upon them are only such as the safety of the state requires, since the writings of their leader, Priestley, have unveiled their secret desire for a republican form of government. In the triumph of that expected revolution here, hitherto happily disappointed, did he unveil it, serving that government he designed to overturn.

Much, therefore, does it behove our ministers to repress attempts to pull away the corner-stones of the constitutional basis, under the now unmasked pretence of parliamentary reform, and extended toleration. Every virtue, carried to an extreme, tends to vice; so is it with national toleration.

Who can love their country, yet wish to see her risk, in the pursuit of imaginary improvement, "her golden vantages," the blessings she is enabled universally to extend, with the horrors before their eyes that such rash experiments have brought upon a nation, which had, what we have not, heavy oppression to plead for making them.

To those who, contemplating the present state of France, preserve their dissatisfaction with our government, America is accessible.

As to the present war, of which you express

such utter detestation, that junction with the allied powers to restrain the spread of anarchy, we had surely been the meanest of nations had we not made it. What! when our generous and long neutrality was repaid by public and unreproved threats in the conventional assembly, to assassinate our ministers, bring our monarch to the block, as they had done their own! to overturn our government, together with that of every other nation!—when their wretched sophistries about liberty and equality were propagated by French emissaries in every part of England!—when they were abetted by the idiot treachery of ungrateful Britons, associating, congratulating, and cringing to the perjured republic, constituted by those unhappy distempered people, who were endeavouring to communicate their plague-spots to our yet healthy region!

Was it not time to assert ourselves, and repel such insulting threats, such dark ingratitude, such mining treachery, by manly, by generous resentment?

I did not approve, any more than yourself, of the Prussian and Austrian invasion last spring. It was premature; the faith of France, pledged to her new constitution and conceding monarch, had not then been violated. Except by the coercive detainment of the king, the preceding year, a

bad prognostic of her want of just principle, she had not then deserved chastisement from the surrounding nations; and Providence enabled the assailed to repel the assailants. But now, loaded with public guilt, stained with innocent blood, lost to every restraint of wisdom, humanity, and religion, it is become the duty of all, who detest her crimes, to abhor her fellowship; to avenge the cause of the plundered and massacred, to prevent the contagion of such crimes diffusing itself to other states.

If ever it was right to petition Heaven for a blessing on the unsheathed sword, it is now that it has been drawn against the lawless, the murderous, the impious, seeking to infect and to subjugate every happier country. I was not well enough to go to church on Friday, but I read the service, appointed for that day, to my family, and my whole heart went with my lips.

How can you ask the question, if it was wise in us to provoke the French to murder their king, by threats of renouncing our neutrality if they did? O! you must know, that a base indifference, a coward silence on our part, during the guilty preparation, could not have prevented its accomplishment. Those, who, in such hours, had not cried out with Daniel, "I am clear

from the blood of this man," had partaken the guilt of shedding it.

You reproach England for non-interference in the affairs of Poland. From distance, and other causes, you cannot but be aware, that it was not in our power to assist that injured country; and there would have been little wisdom in exhausting, in a fruitless crusade, our treasures and our blood.

I have heard it urged against our war with France, that Holland did not claim our protection. What of that? If she was meanly willing to bow her neck to democratic tyranny, it was of the last importance to this country to prevent her subjugation.

By the same post which brought me your letter of March the 3d, anathematizing our rupture with France, I received one from Mr Whalley, the humane, the gentle, and the good. It is curious to mark the difference of opinion on the same subject, between minds so amiable. Observe, that though a clergyman, he neither possesses, nor, from the affluence of his private fortune, seeks church emoluments; therefore can he have no bias from professional interest. Thus he writes:

"O! these accursed French! my soul sickens at their crimes. Great indeed is the conflict between them, and all religion, morality, and the

good government which springs from both. Either these miscreants must be crushed, or havock, disorder, and ruin, must overspread Europe. With power, their vain-glory was never to be trusted, even when restrained by the strong hand of high and long constituted authority. Check the monster, O! my dear country! or thy glory, thy peace, thy virtue, will pass, like a dream, away. The time for difference in speculative opinions is gone; that for decisive counsels and determined action is come; and I consider every man as a traitor to his country, who dares mention peace with the enemies of God and man."

I believe the general sentiments, with few exceptions, concur with Mr Whalley's. The dissenters, however, must not be included. I am afraid they are sorry to see any impediment to the progress of democracy.

Surely you cannot fancy, that because the lion Dumourier turned upon his ungrateful bloody hunters, he was in league with, as you justly style him, the infamous Egalité; nor suppose it a proof of preconcerted treachery and guilt, that a brave and great General, to whom France was indebted for all her victories, should refuse to obey her mandate, which summoned him to the block, because, overpowered by resistless numbers, and by the force of national guilt sitting

heavy on the swords of his troops, the tide of conquest turned against him! O! worse than Rome's ingratitude to her great Coriolanus! Well might it sicken Dumourier of the republican form of government, which had, in return for all his services, left him no alternative but loss of life by assassination, or the ignominious scaffold, except he threw himself into the protection of the enemy!

Such is the reward that anarchy extends to those who toil and bleed for her! After the fate of Fayette and Dumourier, who will pity the fools who shall again command her armies?

But, O! my friend, is it you—you who injure your country so extravagantly, as to suggest that she draws the sword to forward the schemes of the villain she most abhors, the vile Egalité!—Yet, from my soul, I believe Dumourier as innocent as our ministry of such infamous coalition.

The Gentleman's Magazine for last month vexed me extremely. When first the Lives of the Poets came out, several of my correspondents expressed a wish to know Mr Hayley's and my opinion of that work. The request induced me to make extracts from our mutual letters on the subject, which I transmitted to those correspondents, little thinking that publication, unknown to either of us, would ensue. My con-

sent could not have been obtained, because I must always have known that it would be disagreeable to Mr Hayley. Guess, then, how I must be mortified by seeing these very extracts, with our names at full length, and after a ten years dormancy, in the Gentleman's Magazine? Its editor should have inquired of me if I knew and approved of their being sent to his work. We had then been spared this vexation.

The Hayleyan extracts are correct; but a very inaccurate transcript indeed was sent of the passages taken from my letters. By verbal omission in some of the sentences, and by its interpolation in others, they are rendered utterly unintelligible; and most ridiculously in one place, where I had written "*his* (Johnson's) *former* visits," it is printed "*its formal* visits."

I wrote to the dear bard, expressing my concern for the circumstance, chiefly lest he should be displeased with me for having originally furnished indiscretion with the means of dragging us involuntarily before the public eye. His answer is generously kind and indulgent, while it acknowledges the very unpleasant jar given to his feelings by this display. I knew he would start violently at the ghost of his own opinions, staring at him from the Gentleman's Magazine.

The learned and ingenious Mr Berrington was

here yesterday. Once devoted to the French cause, he is now thoroughly ashamed of it, and ingenuously said there was now no mentioning the word *liberty* without a blush. He detests the ingratitude of the public to Dumourier; treats their suspicion of his treachery as the wildest, as well as basest, instance of groundless distrust; adding, that no man's heart was more devoted to the cause for which he so bravely fought, till he found what was likely to be his recompence. Rumours of the hovering impeachment had preceded the arrival of the commissioners. He certainly formed his plans upon them, to be pursued or renounced as he thought the convention base enough to desert, or wise enough to protect him.

This long letter has not been propitious to my precarious health; my head is more painful and oppressed for the degree of earnest thought into which it has led me. I trust this new dissimilarity in our sentiments on one theme, however important, will have no blighting influence upon our friendship.

LETTER LXV.

Mrs Jackson, at Weymouth.

Lichfield, May 3, 1793.

There seems little gratitude in so long a silence to so kind a letter; yet, that this is only seeming, my lost health bears melancholy witness. I am ordered to Buxton when the weather shall grow sufficiently warm. That bleak region stands much in need of being softened by the summer's smile.

If a renovated constitution bless my return, how happy should I feel in the accomplishment of that hope you once allowed me to entertain! The friend, so honoured in your gratifying mention of him, Mr Saville, would, scarcely less than myself, rejoice to see you an inmate of these walls. We talk of you frequently, and of that evening in which he had the pleasure of being introduced to you at Mr Whalley's. The dreadful nervous disease which oppressed him so long, and still at intervals oppresses him, has altered his person, and dampt his once joyous spirits; but his heart loses none of that characteristic

warmth which would delight to renew and to strengthen those dear impressions which your talents and your kindness made on its tablets.

It gratifies me to picture to myself the happiness you felt in returning to Bath. Your absence from it had not been long enough to produce those mortal devastations, which so change and so sadden the re-appearance of scenes and societies, amongst which we had moved through a course of years.

It was always a subject of regret to me, that Mr ——— should waste himself so much upon insipid people, and in eternal card-parties. A social and benevolent desire of obliging, doubtless, first involved him in that train of engagements; and it is always difficult to break the habits of life. He writes to me, that both himself and Mrs ——— have been much out of health this winter; that his complaints were long of dangerous tendency; and that they had left upon him much weakness and languor. Bodily disease will depress our energies; and sometimes with such resistless weight, as to baffle the power of the heart's warm cordial, the restored society of a long-absent friend;—else, surely, had the presence of Mrs Jackson been to none more vividly welcome than to him, whose tongue I have heard so lavish in her praise.

How fortunate for Mrs Pennington, that you could go to Bristol, at a juncture when your support and countenance were so momentous to her! though I doubt not the grace and elegance with which she would perform the ceremonies of that arduous evening. Its hurries and solicitudes happily over, I delight to think of the sweet conversations you held together, in the calm domestic bay that shelters your friend from the storms which had gathered round her little bark.

You will be truly concerned when I tell you that dear Lady Gresley is very ill. The strange disease in her joints, which, of late years, had crippled that yet graceful and elegant form, seems now fallen upon her vitals. She sinks fast, and the danger seems daily to increase. Every possible medical assistance is procured, and she has every tender attention from her amiable daughters. Lady Heathcote passed the last month by the couch of her mother. On Monday she left Lichfield. I much fear it will prove a final separation;—that she will never more behold that best of mothers and of friends. Miss Gresley and Miss F. Gresley never quit her apartment. Alas! she will soon follow her beloved Mrs Bennet, whose loss she wept so tenderly last autumn. I shall lose, in Lady Gresley, a revered friend, whose frequent society I had the happiness to en-

joy, from the time she became an inhabitant of Lichfield. Ever interesting and precious to my spirit was her animated conversation. Never will I forget the affectionate pity she expressed for me during the terrors she saw me suffer from the dangerous illness of the last-left friend of my youth. Ah! poor Miss Gresleys!—their loss will be irreparable; their tears anticipate it daily.

I have transmitted to Mrs Stokes your kind concern for her insuppressive regrets. She is again likely to be a mother. I wish the sex and health of the expected child may open again those soft maternal prospects on which her internal sight, during the days of her Honora, was so fond to luxuriate. She and I now widely differ in opinion. It is the first time in our lives that we have been uncongenial on material subjects. Her husband is, as I have told you, a worthy and ingenious man, but a dissenter, and consequently a democrat. Her affection adopts his prejudices; but not less than infatuation does it appear to me, that any prejudices can be so sturdy, as to resist the strong light of conviction that breaks upon the mischiefs of democracy from beneath the darkness of French crimes.

Dear Mrs Jackson adieu!—The letter before me makes no mention of your injured hand. Its

silence on that subject allows me to hope that time has repaired the evil of accident.

LETTER LXVI.

Mrs Mompessan.

May 11, 1793.

Surely I need not declaim upon the pleasure I should feel in accepting the invitation of my long-valued friend to circle round by Mansfield, in my road to Buxton—but I must hasten thither, the instant some affairs of business shall enable me to leave Lichfield. I console myself beneath the regret of declining a summons so interesting, by the hope of seeing you here in the autumn: Meantime, I trust Mrs Heathcote's society will diffuse the spirit of social joy and confidential friendship in your thrice-pleasant dwelling. I do not forget how agreeably I passed our Italian May this time two years, whose soft and cloudless suns shone upon me, amid the verdant walks and lawns which surround your habitation.

My health is considerably better at present than when I wrote to you last. The medical dis-

cipline of my kind physicians, Darwin and Jones, has availed me much;—but on my spirits the gloom of approaching deprivation sits dark and heavy. My dear and revered friend, Lady Gresley, is dying. Long an invalid, and always growing worse in the winters, we were none of us aware, till lately, that her increased indisposition had dangerous symptoms. Miss Gresleys and I flattered ourselves that the soft gales of spring would restore her to her, at best, feeble level of strength—but within these few weeks dropsical symptoms came rapidly on. It being necessary to keep her as quiet and serene as possible, and her four affectionate daughters constantly with her, I was advised to wave the mournful privilege of daily admittance, which she, dear, dear soul, was kindly desirous to permit me. After a four day's absence, Miss Gresley last night wrote me a note to say, that her beloved mother had expressed an earnest desire to see me; but I must prepare myself to see, with all the composure I could command, a very grievous change. Alas! I had no idea that four days could have produced one so terrible. O! it cut me to the heart to see that pleasing face emaciated to scarce half its proportion;—those intelligent eyes sunk and shadowed over by the mists of death;—that clear melodious voice inward, broken, and inarticulate. I could

but just hear her say, with a sweet mournful smile, "Dear Miss Seward, I was desirous to see you once more—to thank you for your kind and constant attentions. You have made this place much pleasanter to me than it could have been without your society;—ever welcome to me was the sight of dear Miss Seward—may you live long and happy, and may we meet in heaven! I am resigned—I am full of hope in God Almighty's mercy. If it had pleased him, I should have been thankful to have continued longer with my dear, kind, and dutiful daughters, and with my friends—but He does not see fit. My state is hopeless, as to this world, though I have every assistance—every comfort;—but my friends should pray for me, that my release may be speedy. I have no uneasy reflections—I trust I shall be happy."

She then, extending to me her cold hand, sunk back on her couch; nor should I have been surprised if she had died before I left the room. She is, however, alive this morning—but weaker and more ill. Miss Gresleys weep themselves away. I am afraid they will injure their healths. I have myself had little rest through the night. My heart has not been so torn as by the mournful interview of last night, since I lost my dearest father. The image of the dying saint will be

long before my eyes, and long must be the regret I shall feel for her loss. Scarcely less tender than your own was the friendship she expressed for me, though commencing so much later in our mutual lives. She is fifty-eight years—was but a girl when she married—only eighteen when her son, the present Sir Nigel, was born. As a wife, a mother, a friend, her virtues have transcended the common degree of excellence—even where it is such as to merit considerable praise. Never was there a character in which benevolence of heart, and energy of understanding, truth, tenderness, and fortitude, with graceful and benign dignity of manners, were more happily blended.

Adieu! for I cannot enter upon any other subject—my thoughts all wander to the couch of my swiftly-vanishing friend. I am ill with the grief I feel, with the tears I have shed!

LETTER LXVII.

WM. HAYLEY, Esq.

Lichfield, May 15, 1793.

POETIC tributes are due to you, my dear bard. I present Mr Grove's late beautiful monody on Miss Leigh. Funereal verses of less excellence accompany them*. To writing epitaphs I ever feel reluctance congenial to that which I have often heard you express, and grounded on the same reasons; always determining that *that* on the anvil shall be my last attempt to gather monumental florets from a soil so exhausted. This resolution a foolish want of firmness in resisting solicitation, has too often frustrated. It is curious with what intenseness people will press one to write epitaphs for their deceased friends; and, when the desire of obliging has painfully produced the effort, how generally they discover that a prose inscription is most eligible.

* Viz. The author's epitaphs on David Garrick, Mrs Bennet, and Mrs Simpson. They will be found in her Poetic Miscellany.—*S.*

Twin monuments are now erecting, side by side, in our lately much adorned cathedral, for Johnson and Garrick. Dr Vyse, one of its canons, has had the management of both. Last autumn he vehemently solicited from my pen a poetic inscription for Garrick's marble. I would fain have declined the task, but "it was urged past my defence." The request surprised me from Vyse, since, though from infancy we were intimate neighbours, and had each other's first unspoken, though, as it proved, transient love, yet never but once had he hinted to me the slightest consciousness of my having published; nor had he ever addressed me as possessing any claim to literary taste. He is esteemed rather an elegant scholar, and is certainly no contemptible poet, though not an author. The *once* alluded to, was early on the appearance, in Urban's Magazine, of my Horatian Odes—thus—"Nancy, take the advice of an old friend, never again attempt translating Horace, since you do not know Latin." He gave this laconic counsel with an heightened complexion, and an air of angry earnestness.

"I wont promise you, Doctor,—because I was urged to the task by my friends Mr Dewes and Mr Grove, both accomplished scholars. Mr Dewes has often taken the trouble of making prose translations of those odes, which he desired

to see me versify. These are scrupulously faithful, and much more elegant than are the same odes by Smart, and other of the publishers, who have given them without metre. I find the employment easy to me, and very amusing. Though my models are faithful, I do not confine myself to strict fidelity. The spirit rather than the letter is my aim. It was the aim of Dryden and Pope, whose translations are extremely lavish. Hence they have the fire of original compositions. I do not presume to make the same boast for mine;—but my employers praised my execution. Mr George Hardinge, Dr Gregory, and many other gentlemen, high in the world of genius and learning, have warmly encouraged me on the subject; and, therefore, I shall probably supply the Gentleman's Magazine, one year, with an ode for each." He observed, that he was sorry for it, and we changed the theme.

When Dr Vyse pressed me to write Garrick's epitaph, he said the space on the marble required ten lines of verse, in the heroic couplet—no more —no less. Against the attempt, I pleaded that Garrick's principal excellence was not calculated for the solemnity of a cathedral epitaph. He replied—"Garrick had virtues as well as talents. Though a strict economist, I knew of several munificent donations of his to friends in distress,

which he concealed from the obliged with generous delicacy." This was rather encouraging information. I inclose the result. It was honoured by the glowing encomium of Dr Parr, and the attentive approbation of Mr Dewes, when I saw them in Warwickshire last December. In consequence of their criticisms, I made some slight alterations from the first copy. Dr Vyse received it with these retouches, praised the epitaph, and thanked me—but, lo! the monument appears with only a prose inscription.

I was favoured with Mrs Bennet's acquaintance and partial regard. She had been the long intimate friend of Richardson; and their friendship continued till his death. Such were this lady's fine talents and energetic virtues, that no praise of her could be flattery—ever detestable, and most of all on tombs.

She wrote verses with the terse neatness, humour and gaiety of Swift. On her seventieth birth-day, being ill with St Anthony's fire, she wrote an arch and beautiful little poem to reproach the Saint for his bad taste in intriguing with an old woman. Her death happened suddenly last autumn; full of years and honour, she slided with painless speed from the world. Her letters to her friend, dear Lady Gresley, just vanished from our sublunary horizon, breathed, to

the very last, Ciceronian spirit and eloquence. I was entreated, by her surviving friends, to "immortalize," as they flatteringly called it, Mrs Bennet's virtues and talents. Richardson's confidential friendship for her being a discriminating feature in her destiny, I felt less reluctance than usual to comply. It seemed formed, as Madame de L'Enclos said of her amity with St Evremond, to embellish her epitaph. Mrs Bennet lived, of late years, very retired at Worcester. Thither I sent the requested inscription, but know not whether or not it is used.

The third of these epitaphs was, with equal fervour, solicited by Mr Repton, who designed a beautiful monument for the Lady of Mr Simpson of Babworth in Yorkshire. She died in the bloom of youth and beauty, and had been celebrated for her fine voice, and grace in singing, and for her skill in painting.

Her husband anxious, as I was assured, that the talents and merit of his fair beloved might, by my pen, be engraven on her tomb, no sooner finds his request granted, than he discovers, that my prose inscription—for I was requested to send one in prose, and in verse also—was better calculated for a monument which is to be placed over an altar. Absurd! because the design of the monument is poetically fanciful. Of this same

prose inscription, I would not take the slight trouble of preserving a copy. It appeared to me so utterly inferior to the poetic one, that I could not dream of so very prosaic a preference. But I am rightly served for the compliant idiotism of writing epitaphs in verse, against my inclination and resolves.

You received a letter from me of grateful acknowledgment, on the subject of those provoking magazine spectres. You were very good to assuage, by your indulgence, the painful apprehensions their appearance had occasioned. Adieu!

LETTER LXVIII.

—— ECCLES, ESQ. of Ireland.

Lichfield, May 31, 1793.

I ADDRESSED to you, by Colonel St George, a few hasty lines of acknowledgment, for the honour of your so very partial remembrance, for your obliging letter, and for your very acceptable present.

It is now that I must speak to you for the pleasure which my examination of that present has afforded, and will, at intervals, continue to afford

me while life is mine, with such a portion of its best blessing as shall allow me the capacity of literary enjoyment. I am going, by prescription, to try if I cannot repair its late decay by the waters of Buxton.

It would mortify me to leave home without writing to you on the subject of your ingenious, learned, and valuable work; which, for two of the most admired of Shakespeare's plays, collects all the various rays of criticism into one focus, and generally determines the reading of every doubtful passage, by that which throws the strongest light on its sense; or, from the editor's own clear orbit, dispenses one yet more luminous than any of them; while, by the judicious arrangement of the scenes, and accurate conjectures concerning the progress of the scenic time, our interest in the drama is, during the leisure of an attentive perusal, very pleasingly increased.

Was it not for a consideration highly important to the friends of Mr Eccles, I could fervently wish that all the plays of our immortal bard might receive the same advantages; but the labour would be infinite. Were you to undertake so vast a task, I should fear that the intenseness of thought and attention, with the long seclusion necessary for its accomplishment, would be highly injurious to your

health, perhaps even shorten a very valuable existence.

I have always considered Johnson, in his critical capacity, as having done irreparable injury to the cause, and to the claims of poetic literature; since his disingenuousness, inconsistence, and injustice, are hid from general perception, beneath those splendid rays of baneful sophistry, with which he has invested them. Never, in my opinion, was his unjust and insolent dogmatism more injurious; that to the pretensions of the play of Cymbeline. You, Sir, are gentle, and sweet-tempered in no common degree. Those excellencies, rarely united to so much power of mind, I heard attributed to you, before I had the pleasure of your society. When, though so transiently, that pleasure was mine, I saw them in your countenance, and perceived their reality in every cadence of your voice. Surely they were put to a severe trial, when, after so long an intimacy with the loveliest, if not the most perfect of Shakespeare's plays, you admitted upon your pages that unfeeling contempt of its graces, contained in the despot's summary; and when your veneration of his dazzling abilities induced you, in some sort, to give it your sanction, by acknowledging, that perhaps it is not more severe than just.

My warm impatient spirit spurns the decision;

and to the grudging coldness of its praise, and to the absurd exaggeration of its censure, I apply Gay's couplet, so often too applicable to the degrading bias of criticism.

> "O! such blind censors rail in vain,
> What! overlook my radiant train!"

The powers and fascinations of this play, matchless almost even by Shakespeare himself, give us all that is essential to dramatic excellence, variety, truth, and exquisite discrimination,—all the delicate, elevated, and gracious emotions of the human soul, so delineated as to steep the eye of sensibility in pleasurable tears; such life-strokes of poetic imagery, and of poetic language, as bring their object and their scene full before our eyes.

In short, the beauties of this play are everything to the affections and the understanding; its errors, being merely those of costume, are nothing to the affections, or the understanding. Would it have gained one material advantage, if the names had been, as from the epoch chosen they ought to have been, ancient Latin instead of modern Italian?—if the villain had been called Valerius, or Torquatus, instead of Iachimo? I can discern none of the folly Johnson imputes to the fiction—nothing of the impossibility with which he charges the events. He, himself, in the preface to his

Shakespeare, proves the unities of time and place to be unnecessary, which genius may disdain to wear, without danger of disturbing those feelings in the reader, or the audience, the quiescence of which is necessary to the interest of the drama. He is indubitably right in his assertion, that imagination follows the poet through scenes, changing from one part of the globe to another, with the same ease that it at first consents to conceive the stage before us a plain, a forest, or a foreign city: —but he might, nay, he ought to have gone farther, and descanted upon the advantages the dramatic poem inevitably receives from its neglect of the unities, as they respect time or place. How seldom has it happened,—how seldom can it happen, that the space of a few hours, or even days, affords events that may display characters in those different and contrasted situations, which give them the variety, spirit, and interest, that we find in those of Shakespeare.

We find Macbeth a man of high reputation and distinguished bravery, but of yielding virtue; startled by native goodness into temporary remorse, and feebly struggling against the seductions of his ruling passion. Could we have seen his crimes darkening on their progress, till they attain the direst excess of human depravity—could this gradatory apostasy have been shown us—could the noble

and useful moral, which results, have been thus forcibly impressed upon our minds, without a violation of those senseless unities?—Surely no, and the observation of them must have been equally fatal to the most striking and finest characteristic features of the other leading persons of his dramas.

Therefore ought the unities of time and place to be considered, not as wholesome restraints, whose violation, though it may be endured from indulgence to eccentric genius, cannot be approved and sanctioned as example, but as shackles, radically injurious to the best interests of dramatic composition, at least in tragedy; and as "customs far more honoured in the breach than in the observance."

Unity of character is another affair. Nature, not art, prescribes consistence there; at least as far as she herself is consistent. Against her laws no writer so seldom errs as Shakespeare.

Mrs Griffiths' "Shakespeare Illustrated" has not fallen in my way. I desire not that it should, since I find, from this work of yours, that she is an owl to the sunbeams of 'Cymbeline.' That consciousness would tempt me to new-name her book, and call it "Shakespeare Darkened." No composition of hers—I have seen several—ever induced me to think that she had much power of mind.

To enter on comments upon the various readings, suggested by the critics and editors on particular passages in these your interesting volumes, would carry me far beyond the epistolary bounds. One, however, I must notice, where Imogen says to Pisanio,

> "I see before me, man, nor here, nor here,
> Nor what ensues; *but* they've a fog in them
> Which I cannot look thro'."

It is impossible to make sense of that speech, if the word *but* is retained; expunge it, and all the difficulty vanishes;—yet not one of the editors suggest the necessity of expunging it.

From the fac simile of Shakespeare's hand, we find it was a very obscure one. Mine is not nearly so obscure, yet I have experimentally found interpolation, omission, and misreading, so perpetual with transcribers and printers, that it amazes me to find so much needless scruple amongst Shakespeare's editors, about imputing to them the much nonsense they have made in those glorious compositions.

> "I see before me, man, nor here, nor here,
> Nor what ensues; they have a fog in them
> That I cannot look thro'. Away, I pr'ythee,
> Do as I bid thee, there's no more to say;
> Accessible is none, but Milford way."

Far from thinking this passage "remarkable for nothing so much as for unnatural stiffness of phrase," it ever delighted me, by expressing that charming impatience of affection, too warm and generous to be appalled by difficulty or danger. There is a gay spirit of hope in the last line. I have applied it on many of those occurrences, where prudence coldly sought to oppose the dictates of disinterested attachment:

"Accessible is none but Milford way."

It is curious that Shakespeare should, in so singular a character as Cloten, have given the exact prototype of a being whom I once knew. The unmeaning frown of the countenance; the shuffling gait; the burst of voice; the bustling insignificance; the fever and ague fits of valour; the froward tetchiness; the unprincipled malice; and, what is most curious, those occasional gleams of good sense, amidst the floating clouds of folly which generally darkened and confused the man's brain; and which, in the character of Cloten, we are apt to impute to a violation of unity in character; but in the some time Captain C——n, I saw that the portrait of Cloten was not out of nature.

I wonder that none of Shakespeare's annotators

have observed that Cloten is made to speak of Imogen, with that high and peculiar species of praise, which Ferdinand addresses to Miranda; but, with characteristic fidelity, it is given by Cloten in all his uncouth obscurity of conception:

> "I love and hate her, for she's fair, and royal,
> And that she hath all courtly parts more exquisite
> Than any lady, winning from each one
> The best she hath, and she of all compounded
> Outsells them all."

From the lip of the elegant Ferdinand, the same idea meets our ear, in consummate beauty and clearness of expression:

> ——————"For several virtues
> Have I lik'd several women, never any
> With so full soul, but some defect in her
> Did quarrel with the noblest grace she own'd,
> And put it to the foil—but you! O, you!
> So perfect, and so peerless, are created
> Of every creature's best."

In the arrangement, the readings, the notes on Lear, every suggestion of yours meets my perfect concurrence. Hereafter I shall not like to read that play or Cymbeline in any other edition.

An emendation on one of the passages in Macbeth long ago struck me, which I have not seen in any of the editions, or by any of the critics:

——"Now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings—and wither'd murder," &c.

Some of them suggest *withering* instead of *withered*, but neither of the epithets are happy. *Withered* has no meaning, and *withering* is not well applied, because it expresses a slow instead of a violent mode of destruction. It is no custom of Shakespeare's to give us merely make-weight epithets. The passage is more forcible, more in his manner, without any epithet for murder, which certainly wants none, possessing in itself enough of horror. I believe the *d* in *withered* to be another interpolation. Remove it, and disjoin the two syllables, and we have a grander picture by the association of witchcraft and murder; which association his late supernatural salutations, that had suggested his present bloody design, naturally created in his mind:

——"Now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings; and with her, Murder,
Alarum'd by his centinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch," &c.

I cannot close this long epistle, without assuring you, that I think myself honoured by your considering, as a valuable privilege, the request I made to Mr Tighe some years ago, that he would communicate to you any compositions of mine which he might have in his possession.

With high esteem, and awakened sense of obligation, I remain, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER LXIX.

Mr Saville.

Buxton, June 10, 1793.

Here I am, amiable friend, somewhat amended in health, from my safe and pleasant journey hither, gilded by the summer sun; but, after it had shone during a fortnight upon this steril region, unfortunately for me, the weather has been of wintry coldness, with frequent rains and sullen shrouding clouds every ensuing day. Such weather I have long found inimical to my oppressed respiration, and was not without apprehension, that bathing would increase that malady. Thank God I do not find it so.

Lovely engaging Mrs Sedley, of whose attractions and virtues I had heard so much, is beneath this roof, with her blooming friend, our old acquaintance, Miss Greaves. Instantly on my arrival, I received from them the most polite and kind attentions. Mrs Sedley's very indifferent state of health obliges her to live in private. Her apartments are very spacious and elegant. She invited me to drink tea and sup with her the first evening. Thus was I "a stranger, and she took me in." We are perpetually together. She has introduced me to all her acquaintance. We visit together, and I accompany her on her morning airings upon these wild hills. Necessary to her health, they are taken in defiance of the frequent storms. Short emanations of sunshine often pierce through the floating and gloomy clouds, which shroud the mountain-tops, and produce upon their vast and swelling bosoms, those gleaming lights and sweeping shadows, which are infinitely picturesque, and unknown, in any thing like the same degree, to flatter, and more cultivated scenes.

The horizon so inauspicious, I should want exercise extremely, but for the delightful, convenient, and beauteous arcade. It is formed by pillars, open on one side; encircles the horns of the Crescent, and curves round its concave. This

same Crescent appears to me the last result of architectural skill; while, from the amber hue of the Derbyshire stone, it has a mellowness and glow very superior to the glaring whiteness of the Bath buildings. It rivals, in beauty of proportion, the golden-tinted palace of Chatsworth, itself as golden, and, in lightness and grace, our own dear cathedral, though totally different in form to both, as you well know:

> ——————"Not a frieze,
> Or moulded pediment, but in its parts
> Claims kindred with the whole, for ornament
> Is here the offspring of necessity,
> Not the vain flourish of unmeaning art."

Its apartments have the spaciousness and elegance of the seats of men of fortune. Two large hotels form the terminating projections. The ball-room is in one of them, and the most complete for its size I ever beheld. The centre houses are private lodgings, whose inhabitants eat at the hotels; except, indeed, a considerable number, who, from their wealth and rank, think it fine to be unsocial, and have their meals sent from the hotels, to be eat in aristocratic loneliness and state. That opportunity, which such an accession of commodious apartments affords to haughty seclusion,

makes the mind lose, on the social mart, as much as the body gains on the side of comfort. Convenient opportunities for retirement break the mass of company into small parties, that used to combine together, by cheerful and general association, against the long-existing inconvenience of crowded, gloomy, and sullied rooms, and the sluttish plenty of their clattering board. Little now prevails of that universal familiarity, which enabled us to contemplate and discriminate great variety of character.

I have a charming apartment in the centre house of the Crescent, and take my meals at St Anne's Hotel, whose board is extremely well supplied.

Plantations have much softened the surrounding sterility; and, upon the green bosom of a round hill, that fronts this sunny-tinctured Crescent, the eye reposes with benefit and pleasure.

On Saturday I accompanied Mrs Sedley and Miss Greaves to the private parlour of a Mr and Mrs Wilkinson. We were entertained by a protegée of theirs—a Miss Stedman; a miracle of skill on the forte-piano and harpsichord. She is a little, pale, insignificant-looking girl, marked, even to seams, by the smallpox. From the light slenderness of her figure, and the childish smallness of a very white hand, she looks not more than six-

teen, though she is twenty-two. About four years ago, she had the misfortune to perceive a growing deafness, whose progress the most approved aurists have vainly endeavoured to arrest. What pity if it should ever become total. Already she hears nothing that is said in mixed company. Astonishing that the great degree of it she feels, has not robbed her of the power of touching her instrument with matchless delicacy and expression, amidst the lightning rapidity of her execution, and the luxuriant grace of her taste; amidst cadences assuredly extempore, because always varied. From the most powerful fortissimo, she melts away her passages in those gradatory shades of softness, which enable them to find their way to the heart. Your friend, Mr Holride, and some other gentlemen, met us there. All musical amateurs, they were all enchanted by this syren, who not only plays thus divinely, but sings with equal skill—perfectly in tune, and with the most touching expression, in a thin, weak, though sweet voice, "that," as Ossian says of the spirit of the night, "comes, with its low tones, to melt and please the soul, like a gilded mist rising from the lake, that steals on the silent vale, and fills the young flowers with dew."

Mr Holride inquired after you with friendly solicitude, and told the whole company he had

never felt equal pleasure from any man's singing as from yours, owing to the varied and perfect expression which your sensibility and poetic taste gave to your songs.

Buxton is by no means considered as full; and at present chiefly peopled with invalids. It is not the less agreeable to me for not being crowded. I am too unwell not to feel the sitting down to dinner with thirty-five strangers sufficiently formidable,—though I receive very obliging attentions from those of the company whose civilities are most flattering.

It rejoices me that you have been so tolerably well since I left the blooming precincts that boast of *you* as their inhabitant:

> "Thirsis, whose artful notes so oft delayed
> The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
> And sweeten'd every musk-rose of the dale?"

LETTER LXX.

MRS ADEY, of Aylsham, Norfolk.

Buxton, June 14, 1793.

I AM invoking the Naiads of these warm soft springs, to wash away the dregs of that obscure and long disease, which, assuming various forms, has oppressed me since the birth-day of this year. There was reason to hope, that bathing and drinking the waters would have been of great use; but, lo! a violent cold now shivers through my veins. The weather is perverse. After a long drought, and cloudless horizon, no sooner came luckless I, than loud and keen blew the north, and rainy clouds drew their dark trains over the mountains. If this hoarse soreness on my lungs should settle into one of my fierce hereditary coughs, the prospect of the north-coast will vanish from my purposes, and I shall shrink back home to quiet and domestic nursing.

Though, as yet, the young gay crowds do not swarm through our golden Crescent, hitherto have my hours passed pleasantly in musical parties, and in little conversations of intelligence and in-

terest. I am under the same roof with amiable and lovely Mrs Sedley, and dear Mrs Greaves, of our little city. Except the latter, I did not, on my first arrival, personally know a single being of those various groups that inhabit the Crescent, or resort to it in preference to the less splendid dwellings of olden Time. My next favourite after sweet Mrs Sedley, among these stranger tribes, is Lady Clerk, from the environs of Edinburgh. She is here with her laughter-loving husband, who very shrewdly knows life and manners, and the rudiments of many sciences; who plays slow Scotch airs on the violin with the skill of a professor, and the pathos of a lover. Sir John Clerk seems to idolize his lady, who is still very handsome, though no longer a girl. Her figure verges to *en bon point*; but her step, her air, her address, are spirited and graceful; and her conversation is frank, interesting, and gay. Her apartments attract the ingenious and polite of both sexes; and if her parties are not large, they are select.

And Miss Delabere, the engaging sister of my beloved Mrs Granville, I was delighted to find here. Though personally strangers, we knew much of each other. Fast-fading health was the motive of her journey. The paleness of her cheek, the languor or her step, are rendered

pleasing by that pensive sweetness of smile, that touching softness of voice, which are often more conciliating than even the warm glow of independent health, and render even defect lovely.

Sir John E——'s daughters were, on my first arrival, the belles of the scene. The eldest is strikingly handsome, with an air of dignity and fashion, and, as she passes, irresistibly attracts the eye. I had no acquaintance with these nymphs, nor desired it. They have an assured and repulsive haughtiness of look and step, which, though not incompatible with grace, destroys all its interest.—

"The toss of quality, and high-bred fleer."

They soon left us; and to their claim of handsomest, amid a dearth of beauty, succeeded the two Miss C——s, accompanying their portly, handsome, though gouty, father; a very shy country gentleman, who says little, and has but one theme, viz. the hereditary powers and beauties of horn-cattle. His second daughter is most admired; tall and well-shaped; a brunette complexion, of high bloom; dark large round eyes; the full lips and aquiline nose of the Cæsarian medals. Her sister has the same features, upon a less scale; but has neither the height nor bloom

of the younger, who possesses a most uncommon talent for mechanics. She builds little coaches, chaises, and phaetons, which are said to be perfect models; and has no assistance in making the wheels, the windows, or any other part. These young ladies are unaffected; but neither in their persons, their countenance, or manner, is there an atom of grace or expression; and they extremely want that obliging vivacity, which is at once so natural and so lovely in youth.

When I left home, Mrs Cobb was in somewhat better health, and her intellects clearer than they had been some time. Miss Adey is in robust vigour of frame, and has every prospect of longevity; but there is no rational dependence upon these vital perspectives.

This is my native country, and I gaze, with thrills of filial tenderness, even on these wild and barren hills. Tell your beloved Mr Adey, that I purpose going next week to Eyam, the village of my birth, the home of my early infancy; and whither I often used to accompany my father on his summer residences there. I cannot resist the desire of indulging this mournful luxury, in a scene which bears such striking traces of the dear and for ever lost. There is more scenic beauty and cultivated umbrage round Eyam than amidst those naked and monotonous mountains.

Mr Adey's affectionate heart feels the force of local impressions on every seldom visit to his native Lichfield, and will sympathize with me in the sensations that induce this little excursion.

I congratulate you on the public virtue of your favourite friend, Mr Windham. His talents have been long distinguished; and he has now proved his patriotism sincere, by preferring the welfare of his country to private friendship, and party influence. Adieu!

LETTER LXXI.

Mr Saville.

Buxton, June 15, 1793.

Ah! dear friend, it was indeed, in double sense, a malignant fever that, in the prime of youthful manhood, of athletic strength, and florid health, tore young Fern from his family. I am sorry for them all; but I grieve and regret, twenty times a-day, this heavy affliction to his affectionate sister.

The plan of soon living quietly and cheerfully with him, emancipated from the despotism of an

austere father, and from the pernicious influence of a stepmother's art, was the day-dream of her hopes; but, alas!

> "This sunny island of her stormy main,—
> This speck of azure in her cloudy sky,"

is vanished, and the long irksomeness of her situation rises again in prospect for the future, without any distinct termination.

Often, amid the gleam of a watery sunshine, I steal out alone into the grove and gardens belonging to the Old Hall, now seldom frequented, though, till of late years, the *mall* of Buxton. It is there that my meditations are uninterrupted; that I may devote them "to the days of other years." Justly does the dear old Bard of the north observe, that their recollection is "like the calm dew of the morning, on the green hill, when the sun is faint on its side, and the lake is settled and blue in the vale." It is there that the images of my father, my Honora, her since unfortunate André, his pleasing sisters, and yourself, rise, like an exhalation, in my memory. Again do I seem surrounded by that happy party, as in the long-vanished period which formed the ill-starred love of André and Honora. There it is, that tender sighs and starting tears pay, in mournful luxury, the tribute of remembrance.

Another of these deserted walks looks upon a field, which extremely resembles one of my Eyam haunts, where I strayed so often with my dear father. It slopes down the hill that rises above that garden; it is dotted over with patches of lime, fenced with stone-walls, and an even row of dark and straggling fir-trees, just like that steeply-sloping field at Eyam, which leads to the brow of those high and vast rocks that form the Salvatorial dale of Middleton; but this resembling scene at Buxton has no such sublime termination.

I purpose, in a day or two, to pass over these mountains, which, in a succession of twelve miles, divide this place from my native Eyam.—I must behold it once more.

Yesterday, in Lady Clerk's apartment, I found myself amidst a constellation of Scotish talents: Sir Adam Fergusson, whose fine person and expressive countenance have so much serious and manly grace; Baron Gordon, whose cultured mind and polite manners are shaded over by the mellowed impressions of an ever-present regret for the death of an adored wife; whose voice, in speaking, wholly exempt from the accent of his country, this bosom woe renders touching as the tones of an Æolian harp: Mr Stuart Monteith, a venerable seer of fortune and family, with a

countenance beaming with philanthropy, and an ever-open treasury of anecdote and knowledge:—

> " Right glad of heart, though homely of array,
> His russet beard, and locks of silver gray,
> That down his bending shoulders loosely hang."

With these were the shy Mr Sommerville, who seldom speaks but on paper, and there, I am told, he speaks well; Sir John Clerk, with a broad Scotish brogue, and an high feminine tone of voice, makes odd cadences in speaking; but his smile is festive, and arch; shrewd comic humour streams from his little laughing eyes; and he is genuinely good-natured, though somewhat tenacious and imperative in argument. He doats upon his lovely lady; and when narrating circumstances, with which she must be familiar, his eyes involuntarily fix on her face, as he were informing her rather than the company. However strict politeness may militate against this habit, it pleases me as a proof of true attachment.

That being of true integrity—that prodigy of self-cultivated genius, Newton, the minstrel of my native mountains, walks over them from Tideswell, his humble home, to pass the day with me to-morrow. To preclude wonder and comments upon my attentions to such an apparent rustic at the public table, I have shewn two charming

little poems of his, which are deservedly admired by every body here. Expecting a letter from you on Monday, I will not finish this till I receive it.

Tuesday Morn, June 18.

I am very sorry you were so unwell when you wrote to me on Saturday. Surely it was only one of those transient indispositions, which, after so long an illness, convalescence must expect. Do not delay your journey to Weymouth. May our merciful Creator give salubrious powers to the waters of his ocean, when they encircle my friend.

The wintry storms of Sunday morning detained my minstrel at home, in deceived hopes of the fairer hour, so that he did not arrive till one. Nothing could be more flattering to me and to him, than the reception he met with from the company at St Anne's. They were generous enough not to suffer his plain appearance, his unpowdered and drenched locks, and provincial accent, to chill the civilities and respect which they shewed him. When I took him to the public table at the hotel, I particularly presented him to Sir John and Lady Clerk, the Baron, &c. They conversed with him; they praised his verses. Lady Clerk desired Mr Newton and myself would drink tea in her parlour. We had previously engaged our-

selves to Mrs Sedley; but we went to Sir John and his Lady at seven, and staid with them till the supper-bell rung; when, contrary to all our entreaties, he would not stay till next morning. Business obliged him to encounter a walk of such fatiguing length. The storms still roared and wept beneath the mantle of night; but he is used to these wintry walks. Sir John and he talked much of mechanics, and Lady Clerk conversed with him about Sterne's writings, of which she is an admirer; and he recalled to her recollection a number of those fine characteristic lifestrokes, which delineate dear Uncle Toby and the sub-acid philosopher, his brother. Every body was pleased with the mingled genius and modesty with which he delivered his requested sentiments and opinions.

I have the pleasure of finding two pleasing ladies of Yorkshire, with whom I was acquainted on my former visits in that country, my neighbours, Miss Broadly and Miss Collins.

This letter will be directed to Bath. May it be opened in that city with an healthy hand, and perused with an unsaddened heart; but do not linger there one unnecessary hour. The sea! the sea!—

> " To brace those nerves again, and cheer that heart,
> And many a gladsome day and balmy night impart."

LETTER LXXII.

MR SAVILLE.

Buxton, June 22, 1793.

DOUBLY welcome was your letter, my ever estimable friend;—the last left friend and companion of my youth, at least with whom I can have frequent association;—first was your letter welcome, by imparting a safe arrival on the ocean's edge; and next, for its ingenious critical disquisition. Nothing can be more just than your discrimination between a ridiculous improbability, and an animated hyperbole.

Our fears for the existence of * Mr Seward, happily prove vain. He is here in perfect health. It was my good fortune to procure him a seat next me at dinner—where he pours out streams of wit, rapid and incessant as that of Congreve himself—but he is the very Poco Curante of Voltaire. His sarcastic imagination has blunted his sensibilities to excellence; so that, with all his learning and

* This gentleman is mentioned in Mr Boswell's life of Dr Johnson, as being often in his parties.—*S.*

knowledge, which are considerable; with all his wit, which is dazzling; he is the last man whose opinion should be taken concerning a work of genius.

The world has whimsically nicknamed this gentleman, it calls him Suward,—what is more odd, he chooses it should do so. His ear must be a bitter bad one, to prefer the harsh corruption of our name to its true sound—Suward to Seward!

Within these few days, a group of quakers, from Dublin, appeared at St Anne's. They introduced themselves to me, as connected with Mrs Knowles, by the bands of distant consanguinity, and nearer friendship. They are all social, friendly, and well-informed; and two of them have shining talents: Miss Strangman, who is from Leake, and met them here; and the blooming Hibernian, Miss Forbes. The first of these twain writes elegant verses, and the other has a brilliant and creative pencil. Miss Forbes is young, and "jocund as the month of May." She is rather tall and well shaped, pleasing eyes, fine teeth, an open countenance, a smile, intelligent from the accompanying expression of the eye, and sportive by the power of two bewitching dimples. Balance e contra—face a little too broad, a chin a little two square, and a mouth that will be nut-cracks at 60, though its roses and its pearls now render it charming. She

vows that I draw and paint well, because she says there is so much picture in my poems,—and lo! Sir Archibald Grant asserts to every body, that I play and sing divinely, while the people who hear him say so, plead my tone of voice in speaking, against my disavowal. See how much kinder to me than dame Nature, are my new friends on the score of talents!

Dear Mrs Sedley is sadly out of health. She was so ill yesterday, that Dr Denman advises her leaving Buxton immediately; so we lose her to-morrow, and this scene to me will then be deprived of its first charm. I go to Eyam to-morrow—ah! it is thus that the yearning heart incurs voluntary pain!

Monday, June 24.

I will not attempt a minute description of yesterday's sensations; the feeling heart of my friend will conceive them; the increasing throb, "the strengthening thrills of melancholy pain," as I drew nearer and nearer to the parental scene. Though the air had the sharpness of March, the sun shone clear and bright. Its rays played on the vast rocks of that known * dale, which must be passed from

* Commonly called Middleton Dale, though it belongs to Eyam, which lies on the left, amongst the cliffs above.—*S.*

Eyam to every surrounding hamlet or villa. I could not restrain the gushing tears, through almost the whole of the five hours I passed in that dear village. Its inhabitants flocked about me, and lamented afresh my dearest father's loss to them,—he who had been their benevolent rector forty years: they expressed the most affectionate joy to see me; honest, grateful creatures, they rung three peals to welcome me; and I departed in the evening, amidst their warm benedictions. Oh! every face, every voice recalled, with redoubled force, my lost father.—And the sight of the desolate rectory!—I did not enter it,—I could not; but I lingered in the churchyard, weeping bitterly as I gazed on the walls, the windows, the neglected garden, which, in despite of their altered appearance, yet strongly bear the stamp and magic of their vanished possessor, who loved me with so much passionate tenderness.

It was eleven o'clock ere I got back to Buxton; the night dark and rainy. So that drear was my returning transit over those steep and stormy mountains.

A pleasing surprise this morning—the sight of my old friend, Mr Sneyd, of Belmont, walking in the Crescent. The pleasure of this encounter was mutual, if I may judge from the gladness of his voice and eye. He is a very pleasing and a very

amiable being.—Strange was the news he told me from Lichfield, and which he had himself heard at Derby. It induced me to exclaim, "Can F——— die?" Shakespeare, you know, makes Cleopatra ask that question of Anthony, when he tells her of the death of Fulvia—"Can Fulvia die?" If Mr Sneyd's information was veritable, the event will scarce inspire a living creature, except his daughter, Mrs L., with more regret than the bright Egyptian felt for the death of her rival; though the exultation she experienced will probably be confined to messieurs the proctors.

"So perish all, whose breasts ne'er learnt to glow,
For others good, or melt at others woe."

Adieu!

LETTER LXXIII.

Mr Saville.

Scarborough, July 18, 1793.

An air of languid health pervades your last letter, but I hope it is only the effect of that horizon

which glares sultry on the warm coast of Weymouth. We find no annoying heats on this northern shore. The dog-star never rages here.

My journey was safe and pleasant. They told me, at Buxton, that I must sleep at Doncaster; but I thought it hard if I could not make a yet farther stretch in the long summer's day; though from Buxton, till we had passed the east moor,

> "The high wild hills, and rough uneven ways,
> Doubled our miles, and made them wearisome."

After gliding through that rich, romantic, and lovely country, which extends from thence to Doncaster, we found ourselves on a dead flat of 20 miles length; barren, dreary, brown, and overrun with thistles. Our road lies on the banks of a tide-river; which being out, its pale waters slept in their channel, between the broad and slimy levels. Thus we travel to Booth-ferry; nor, on crossing it, find any other improvement of scene, besides quitting the sluggish river, till within six miles of dear Westella. It is then that, from the summit of a gentle hill, a striking contrast of luxuriant scenery lies beneath. The whole country seems an extended range of pleasure-grounds, so richly has it been cultivated and adorned by mercantile opulence. Its villas, thickly sown, vie in elegance with the

seats of our nobility, and adorn the lovely villages of Welton, Feriby, and Westella; behind them rolls the magnificent Humber, three miles broad. It seems to lie upon the tops of the dark and ample woods, that intervene between the village of Welton and its banks. In that village lives my dear old friend Mrs Collins. She is a second Mrs Jackson, in the vigour and cultivation of her mind; and her sensibilities have lost none of their innate glow, after the wear and tear of near seventy years. Her reception of me had the most affectionate gladness. By setting out very early from Thorn, I reached Welton by eleven, and passed the remainder of that fine summer's day amidst the loveliest scenery imaginable; for her neat, convenient, and pleasant little mansion, curtained with woodbines and roses, is surrounded by the Arcadian walks, woods, and lawns, of her wealthy neighbours, to which she has constant access.

In the evening I proceeded through the four remaining miles of ornamented country which lead to Westella, from whose ever-hospitable mansion my pen has often addressed you in the summer years of my life. I found dear Mr Sykes at the gate of his paradise, impatient for my arrival, and receiving me with that polite, yet warm affection, which mark his character, and which time has nothing tarnished. By his side

stood the pride of his age, his graceful daughter, my pupil during several weeks, when she was in her thirteenth year. Her shape, her air, her figure, her manners, her species of mind and understanding, resemble my lost Honora, though without any likeness of complexion or feature. Judge how a similarity must interest and delight me, so much to be desired for the daughter of my friends; for her, whose pure mind, in that "ambiguous period," I had endeavoured to inspire with a love of genius, at once awakened and discriminating, and with a generous disdain of every feeling which debases the heart of woman.

Her excellent mother is recovering from a long and dangerous illness—but even more interesting and graceful from beneath its languors, and the venerable mellowness of far advanced life. Tears of pleasure mutually witnessed the affection of our first embrace, after an absence of so many years. She was surrounded by her daughter-in-law, Mrs Richard Sykes, and her children; their father is in Derbyshire. The choice of his ever-ardent heart seems formed to make him happy. The cheerful sweetness and mildness of her disposition will temper and assuage the warm impetuosity of his spirit. She is amiable enough to love me for the very circumstance which would repel every idea of partial predilection in a less

generous mind,—for having involuntarily engrossed the first tribute of that youthful heart, whose more discerning and mature affections are all her own.

The third and fourth sons of this prosperous house, are also both married, to sweet little women, and live near Westella. The tyrant of the tomb has made fewer depredations in this family, than generally mark his progress during the elapse of sixteen years. One lovely youth, the second of these fair branches, has been his only victim since that period in which those whose infants now play round the knees of my venerable friends, were almost children themselves.

Westella, always pretty, is much expanded, and, by the growth of its plantations, so shadowed and adorned, as to be quite a fine scene, resembling Lord Vernon's in its walks and extent of lawn, with the vast advantage of the majestic Humber in front.

The party who allured me to this celebrated coast, and by whom I was met with the kindest welcome, would render a desert agreeable; and for me there is a solemn charm in marine scenery, more touching than even the Edenic combinations of inland landscape. I felt the thrills of delight, approaching it after so long an absence. Ah! how many churlish winters, and laughing

springs, how many events, and, alas! how many deprivations have I known since last these eyes beheld "the billowy and the boundless main," or my soothed ear listened to its hollow murmurs.

I have almost lost my cough—the balmy waters of Buxton prevented its usual inveteracy, and change of air and travelling nearly banished it.

It is with great concern that I perceive dear Mr Dewes thinks himself in a deep decline. We all flatter ourselves that he is mistaken, obstinate as is that evening-fever, which, in despite of good meals, and tolerable nights, wastes his always slender frame, and consumes his strength; but I hope every thing on his account from the sea-breezes, so potent to dispel hectics. Mr Dewes is one of those beings with which this world of ours does not profusely teem, and who cannot pass away from its orb without grieving many hearts, and darkening many comforts. Ah, Giovanni!—last-left friend of my early youth, it is not long since I suffered for you the sad extreme of that apprehended passing-away. Heaven, in its mercy, has dissipated the dread. The devout gratitude my heart feels on the occasion, is a more certain test of my true friendship, than even all the other trials it has so firmly stood. Adieu!

LETTER LXXIV.

MR NEWTON, the Peak Minstrel.

Scarborough, July 21, 1793.

MY worthy friend's request to hear from me, while I remained on this coast, must not be neglected. It was on Bridlington Quay only that I ever before saw the ocean. This beach has more picturesque and varied objects, with its silver sands covered with smart people, and with equipages, its slanting town, and castle-crowned cliff, and the countless sails on its glassy bosom;—yet, as I observed to you at Buxton, it was the request of friendship, and the attraction of a society ever interesting, which prevailed over my design of enjoying that retirement I can so seldom obtain upon the less-frequented coast of Bridlington, where I could often have wandered, contemplative and alone, upon "the damp and shelly shore."

The party I have joined makes Scarborough pleasing to more than my sight, else I do not violently love these very crowded public places. The cold-hearted increase of that silly pride, which prevents general intercourse, makes them

every year less and less interesting. : At best, society without friendship is but a barter of ceremony; and even friendly intercourse, such as I now enjoy, is so perpetually interrupted in residences like these, that the hungry spirit only tastes, it does not feed. The duties and claims, and the nominal amusements of such residences, dismiss, like Sancho Panca's physician, the banquet, and avidity catches at illusion.

On Friday evening I beheld a scene, whose maritime beauty, of the placid kind, was consummate. After the long duration of our warm and glowing sky, it that night prognosticated a change of weather. The gloomy clouds that floated through a part of the horizon, darkened the surface of the vast ocean, while the sun was setting gorgeously in the clearer west, and sinking behind the hill to the right-hand of the sea, over which the rays, glancing obliquely, ambered the rocks, tipt with fire the roofs and chimnies of the ascending town, the turrets of the castle, the masts and sails of the ships, scattered profusely, and at various distances, over the deep. This contrast, formed by its dark surface, and illumined accompaniments, had a novel and striking effect. In that instant of gratified vision, my voice, in exclamation, caught the ear of a gentleman, who, with his back towards our party, was leaning over

the rails of the cliff, in delighted contemplation of the scene. Turning hastily, I saw my ingenious and amiable townsman, Mr J. Salt, who has lately studied physic, and taken his degree at Edinburgh. A rencounter thus unexpected, could not but be pleasing to us both, so far from our mutual home. I regret that he proceeds thither to-morrow.

Here is a toilsome cliff to be descended to the sands;—it is formed to gratify the eye, but to weary the limbs, and exhaust, I think perniciously, lungs which, like mine, have impeded respiration. This is an inconvenience which we escape at Bridlington.

The morning ensuing after the scene I have just described, arose with loud and tempestuous winds. I hoped they would have lashed the ocean out of its serene beauty into sublimity yet more interesting; but it only boiled and bubbled a silvery effervescence on the green expanse. No high conflicting waves. They tell me, however, that if these winds had blown east, instead of south, we should have seen a prodigious sea, which would have sufficiently gratified my taste for the terrific.

To amuse the road hither, Miss Sykes lent me a German tragedy, which had been vastly extolled,—the Robbers. Its hero, naturally brave and

generous, by extravagance, misfortunes, and unbridled passions, is led into the most attrocious crimes. Dark and violent situations in dramatic writing, require blank verse, and this jumble of horrors is in prose; while the vulgar and ludicrous language, used by several of the personages, the scolding violence of the heroine, whom her lover declares to be so gentle, and the utter improbability of the events, repressed my sympathy, and inclined me rather to laugh than shudder. The only striking and grand incident is borrowed from the history of the Turks. The Sultan Mahomet, being reproached for an uxorious excess of passion for the beautiful Irene, assembles his ministers and officers, and leading her into the midst of them, unveils her face and bosom, then demands which of them could resist or relinquish, after possession, such transcendent charms. They all acknowledge the impossibility of doing either. Upon this the sultan looks furiously around, and, twisting her luxuriant tresses round his left arm, draws his scymitar, and, at one stroke, severs her head from her body, exclaiming, as he held it aloft, "Who now shall reproach me with the want of self-government?"

I purpose being at home early in September. There I shall hope to hear from you, and to receive some account of the resurrection of that fine po-

litical poem of yours, committed, by needless scruple, to purposed oblivion and actual fire.

LETTER LXXV.

Mr Saville.

Scarborough, July 24, 1793.

I rejoice that your health continues to receive the hoped advantages on that warm and smiling coast, whose sheltered seas sleep so serenely. You have described its situation with such ingenious precision, that I seem myself to be there.

Mrs Sykes, too feeble from her late illness to encounter the gay hurries of Scarborough, lamented that I had pledged myself to the dear party which preceded me there, contrary to my first preference of the quieter shore of Bridlington, whither herself and Miss Sykes would have accompanied me. My Calwich and Wellsburn friends leave this place on Monday next. That day seven-night I have appointed the Westella party to meet me there. I please myself with anticipating the delight I shall feel in their society

Lady Lifford is a charming woman, very tall, finely shaped, and graceful. Her eyes are beautiful, her countenance modest, yet noble, with a smile of interesting promise as to mind, which promise, the gradual disclosures of growing acquaintance more than fulfil. Of manners easy, obliging, unassuming, she neither exacts respect, nor seeks admiration, while her virtues and her talents inspire both. My Lord seems a worthy and friendly character. It is not to you that I need describe Mrs Granville, whose personal graces are of a softer kind—"woman, her pretty self;" while the soundest good sense, serene sweetness, and amiable sensibility, engage the love and respect of all who know her, and form the happiness of his life, whose intelligent mind, generous, hospitable temper, and manly openness of heart and manners, deserve the possession of a woman, whose price, as Solomon justly says, "is far above rubies."

I had promised to accompany these ladies to the ball last night, but was entirely incapacitated by a fatiguing walk in the morning down the long, steep, dirty streets of Scarborough, with their tainted gales of fishy fume. We went on board a large new ship, and I examined, for the first time, that important construction of human ingenuity. Languid from such an exertion, I found

myself obliged to renounce the ball; so I sat with Mr Dewes and Miss Delabere, who is also invalid, in their charming drawing-room, which, from the highest part of the cliff, overlooks the sea. I felt a solemn pleasure in observing the evening shades gradually glooming its waters.

Mr and Mrs Wingfield of Shrewsbury, with their son and two daughters, sweet engaging young women, have visited and shewn me the politest attention.

Yes, I promise myself great pleasure in devoting a couple of hours to an attentive examination of York Cathedral on my way home; that noble, that transcendent, that last result of Gothic skill and sacerdotal magnificence. I will bear to hear you speak of our lovely cathedral as little, but not as mean, in the comparison; as a pheasant to an eagle, as the river Dove to the Humber. Adio.

LETTER LXXVI.

Rev. Dr Parr.

Scarborough, July 27, 1793.

Disease gloomed, and made long my wintry and vernal hours, since I had the honour and delight of conversing with you in Warwickshire. Dr Darwin enjoined, that I should go to Buxton in June, pass some weeks there, and then travel onward to the North Coast, for the benefit of sea-bathing. Inexpressibly do I regret this watery discipline, whose necessity has deprived me of the power to receive that highly gratifying visit from Dr Parr, the hope of which had been so precious.

Travelling thus far to obtain the smiles of Hygeia, I am ordered to wait upon her naiads on the ocean brim, during a period of equal length with that on which I courted those who administer at her soft fountains in Derbyshire. Having promised to pause on my way home with some friends of my infancy and youth in Yorkshire, it must be the second week in September ere I can return to Lichfield. I fear your attention to your

pupils will not suffer me then to enjoy that pleasure of which this reluctant excursion has deprived me. Surely you could not doubt my being absent from Lichfield, when you waited in vain for an acknowledgment, so instantly due. May I I hope to see you during the Christmas recess? Whenever you shall again extend to me an expectation thus flattering, I will avoid every interfering scheme.

My health is better than it was in the winter and spring, though I am still often indisposed. My obligations are perhaps more to the warmth of summer for this amendment, than to my libations from the naiads, and immersion in their waves, than to the attractions and repulsions of stranger intercourse; or even to the dearer society it has afforded me with long absent friends. When the spirit of youth has evaporated, fatigues are not easily recompensed to the languid, or broken habits to the stationary. Often, on this absence from our little city, do I look back with home-sick eyes, to my umbrageous retreat beneath its spires, especially when the swart star glares.

This gay and busy shore has considerable picturesque beauty, as perhaps you are visually conscious; but I regret that its seas have slept since my arrival in mirror calmness, and would have

thanked the ruder winds to have lashed them into sublimity.

The pleasure of Mr Dewes'—of Mr and Mrs Grenville's, and Miss Delabere's society, allured me hither from my purposed residence, on the more retired coast of Bridlington, 20 miles from hence. Amiable Lord and Lady Lifford are of their party. My daily visits to them have constituted the chief, though not the sole social charm of this bustling scene; yet alas! it has been often darkened by concern, to see dear Mr Dewes so languid and out of health. We hope and trust, however, that his complaints are not dangerous.

That interesting group leave Scarborough on Monday, and therefore I have promised to meet my old friends of this country the ensuing week at Bridlington, if lodgings can be procured for us there.

Do you not admire this second Judith, the young fair one of Normandy, who has slain the bloody dictator at Paris, without waiting for his intoxication, or his slumber, to give her courage for the blow?

Adieu, dear and honoured Sir.—I dare assure myself, you rejoice that our political horizon is cleared of that lurid turbidity with which it scowled when we met in Warwickshire.

LETTER LXXVII.

To Mrs Short.

Scarborough, July 29, 1793.

It was only a few days since, and at this place, that I heard of the death of dear Mrs Stow*. How deeply your affectionate heart has felt the pains of this separation, I know from experience, and I feel a keen sympathy with those pains, which can perhaps result alone from having felt them.

The long cherished, the long beloved of your heart is no more. She falls, ripe fruit, into the lap of our general mother,—but you will, I fear, perpetually regret her; and I know, that though she gave you not birth, you will often often recal her image, and weep that the venerable form is now only with you in ideal presence.

I fear also, that your deeply injured constitution will suffer yet farther from this event;—but sweet is the consoling consciousness, so plenteously yours, of having, during many years, administered with unwearied care and tenderness, those com-

* Mrs Short's mother-in-law.—S.

forts to her declining age, which not only cheered, but undoubtedly prolonged its date.

I think and talk of you frequently, though our mutual avocations estrange our pens from each other—and never does your idea present itself to my mind, unaccompanied by the warmest wishes for the restoration of your health;—a blessing which would extend to the good of many, as well as to your own happiness—but your friend, Mr Barber, from whom I learnt last week your recent loss, could not feed the avidity of my spirit on that interesting theme.

It is in pursuit of health that I have travelled thus far. The excursion has shown me some engaging characters, amidst the much larger mass of folly, vanity, and pride, which are continually exhibiting their withering effect upon the social pleasures. Some of the sweetest of those pleasures, tasted since I left home, arose from my renewed intercourse with the Westella family, unbeheld through so many years. I passed three delightful days on my way hither, where formerly many an animated week has, at different periods, speeded away.

Miss Sykes is a very charming woman, elegant and graceful in her form and address. By the best chosen studies, she has assiduously cultivated her naturally fine talents, and her benevolent vir-

tues have the most active energy. In her native village, she has established and supports two charity schools, to which she constantly attends, like a ministering angel; nor can anything exceed the sweetness of her filial duties and attentions to her admirable parents. I am sure you will be glad to hear that the fair and gentle girl, whom you used so kindly to pet and play with, during the time she was my pupil, is become so bright a pattern of female excellence.

My long-valued friend, Mr Dewes, is here with his brother and sister Granville; but he is lamentably out of health, nor does his disease yield, as we hoped, to the effects of sea-air. My concern on this account has diminished the pleasures I should otherwise have enjoyed, in passing a part of every day since my arrival with him, and his infinitely agreeable party. Ah! Heaven restore Mr Dewes, and comfort you under the regrets of deprivation!

LETTER LXXVIII.

MR SAVILLE.

Scarborough, July 29, 1793.

THIS morning the dear party, vanishing from the cliff, dissolved for me the magnetism of Scarborough. I passed almost the whole of yesterday with them. Mr Dewes, inquiring after you, most kindly bids me say, that he sincerely rejoices in the benefit your health has received from your excursion to Weymouth. He does not think himself better; but I trust he is mistaken. O! justly do you say, that we cannot afford to lose such men, so thinly sown in this thick-swarming world.

That I am most truly glad of the renovated health you have imbibed on the ocean's edge, you surely will not doubt; nor that I sympathise with every good that is ordained you, with every joy that you feel. I praise you for resisting the sailing temptations, for not trusting the flattery of the summer-seas, which has so often proved fatal where the security was no less apparent.

Whenever the wind blows from the east at this port, however calmly it may breathe on shore, the sea runs high. All yesterday it had a large portion of the sublimity I had invoked. About a quarter of a mile down the right-hand sands, a small promontory juts out; upon its topmost bank, about twenty yards high, the chalybeate springs arise; and there also a fort is constructed, with parapet walls, to which we ascend by steps. At high-water, the sea encircles this promontory, and lashes its rocks.

Last night, at eight o'clock, as we walked upon the cliff, we saw the waves of a sublimely agitated sea dashing and bounding up the sides of the fort, their spray flying over its parapets. The tide was then on the turn, and we were told, that, in about an hour, we might walk to the promontory, by keeping close to the base of the rocks, and attain the elevation before the waves had ceased to lash and clamber up its walls. Nobody but myself being inclined to venture, I went home to undress, resolved to taste, amidst the incumbent gloom of a very lowering night, a scene congenial to my taste for the terrible graces. Requesting the stout arm of Mr Dewes's servant, I began with him my sombre expedition. As I passed along the sands, the tide twice left its white surf

upon my feet; and the vast curve of those fierce waves, that burst down with deafening roar, scarce three yards from me, sufficiently gratified my rage for the terrific.

We found the lower steps of the fort inaccessible, from the waters not having yet receded from them; but, with some difficulty, climbing behind the rocks, I got upon a level with the sixth step, and was thus enabled to ascend the eminence. By this time, the last gloom of the night had fallen, and the white foam of the thundering waters made their "darkness visible." It seemed scarce possible that an unconscious element could wear such horrid appearances of living rage. Each billow seemed a voraginous monster, as it came roaring on, and dashed itself against the repelling walls. The spray of each flashing wave flew over my head, and wet me on its descent. The pealing waters, louder than thunder, made it impossible for me or the servant to hear each other speak. My own maid would not venture to accompany me on an expedition of such seeming peril. I stood at least half an hour on the wild promontory's top, almost totally encircled by the dark and furious main. It was half past ten when I returned to Lord Lifford's, to take my leave of the party, and to acknowledge

the infinitely kind attentions with which they had honoured me.

We passed Thursday last in a beautiful, a richly umbrageous, and romantic dale, about seven miles from hence; the rival, in picturesque graces, of most which adorn the Peak of Derbyshire, with only one inferiority, its water. The Vale of Hackness boasts only a tolerably broad and gurgling brook, which presumptuously assumes the name of Darrent. Screened by overhanging alders, it winds through the bosom of the glens, and is scarce seen, except on its brink; but, from the hills which encircle them, we see the ocean, covered with ships, stretching over the magnificent woods of Rainsford, that curtain the mountains with lavish luxuriance.

Mr Dewes, and Master and Miss Hewit, the son and niece of Lord Lifford, and myself, went to Hackness in Lord Lifford's coach; graceful and amiable Lady Lifford, and Mr and Mrs Granville, on horseback. The village, "marked with a little spire," nestles deep in the vale: near it a small rural inn, for the accommodation of the numerous parties which resort from Scarborough, to enjoy a scene of such striking contrast with the uncurtained beach, the monotonous ocean, and the crowded town, whose red

houses run up the cliffs, and parch in the noontide suns.

At this petit inn we dined in great plenty and comfort; our eggs and bacon, our cold mutton and pease, our roast fowl, and our gooseberry-pie, acquiring a relish from the ride, and previous ramble in the dale; relish which seldom seasons the viands of a pompous board.

We drank tea on the shady brim of the stream that huddles through a rocky channel, and with its liquid notes, assists the waving alders and taller beeches in tempering the heats of the day.

It was a scene and a society to soothe every latent discontent of the heart, and, as Milton says of Eden, to "chace all sorrow but despair."

I dine with the Wingfield party to-day, and accompany them to the ball at night. I went to the Friday assembly with Lady Lifford and Mrs Granville. The present fashion of head-dress, unless tempered as it was by the hand of taste on Lady Lifford, Mrs Granville, and Miss Wingfield, has an undoing influence upon youth and beauty. The Lady L——s had disposed their hair exactly to resemble the lank straight locks of a methodist parson, and wound it round with something they called turban, scarce resembling the Turkish head-dress, which is very graceful, and which

Lady Lifford's, Mrs Granville's, and Miss Wingfield's, as I observed before in my exception, did very much resemble; the Lady L——s looked like diseased heads bound up in towels. They were extremely unjust to their personal attractions. People who are of rank to lead the fashions, are either accountable for the false taste of ungraceful invention, or for grovelling acquiescence, in following the bad taste of others. Lady Susan is finely shaped, and dances accurately; but Lady Georgiana unites to all the skill and variety of step, the most joyous and liberal grace of the head and arms.

Wednesday, July 30.

O! Mr Wingfield, calling upon me an hour ago, has communicated very afflicting intelligence,—the death of dearest Mrs Sedley, announced in the Star of to-day. She was deplorably out of health at Buxton—perpetually subject to bilious sickness; but as these complaints had been of two years date, as her intervals of health were inspirited by a vivacity that animated everybody, and everything, nobody seemed to apprehend her life in danger. Never knew I what it was to love a person so tenderly, on so short an acquaintance; indeed, never were manners more calculated to conciliate affection.

Fine sense, sweetness of temper, ingenuousness, elegance of form, melody of voice, and the most benevolent desire of pleasing, combined to form their magic. She assured me at our parting of her true regard, and that, expecting to *like*, she found she *loved* me; and then exacted my promise of passing some time with her at Natchall, when I came into Nottinghamshire. Alas, this expanding friendship death blights in its first flower; but, O! her husband! who loved her so fondly, as never to have passed one day's absence, during a fourteen years wedlock, without writing to her!—how bitter will be his sufferings!—

Mr Wingfield tells me more unwelcome news, but of trifling moment compared to this,—poor Captain Diamond has lost his prize, wrecked on the rocks of Falmouth.

Mrs Wingfield is highly interesting and amiable; and her daughters inherit their mother's mild virtues and graces; but my thoughts, busy in recalling Mrs Sedley's image, can dwell on no other theme.

You will soon return to beauteous Lichfield. May you look on the spiral ladies of that valley with the eyes of health and gladness.—Adieu.

LETTER LXXIX.

Mrs Mompessan.

Bridlington Quay, Yorkshire, August 15, 1793.

That you have been so ill, dear friend, I am sorry, but comforted that, writing in a state of convalescence, your disease is amongst the number of past evils, for which concern rises in our bosom, "shorn of its stings."

This long excursion has afforded me many pleasures, besides having, as I hope, contributed to the restoration of my health. At Buxton, I formed a friendship with excellent Mrs Sedley, which the resistless disappointer of human wishes has most unexpectedly nipt in its first interesting expansion.—On my road to the North coast, after travelling through long tracks of brown and thistly sterility, scenes of the highest and most ornamented cultivation rose to my eye, on the banks of the majestic Humber, which is there several miles broad; and it seemed a drive of several miles through a gay garden, the pleasure-grounds of each elegant and thick-sown villa extending from one to another. I dined with my dear and old

friend Mrs Collins, whose virtues glow, and whose intellectual lights burn brightly as your own, in despite of the snows which time has shed upon your mutual foreheads.

In the evening, I proceeded where, four miles farther, the known woods and lawns of Westella, haunts of my youth, adorn the banks of that flood of liquid silver, which rolls in their view. I was received with animated and cordial welcome; its glow seemed proportioned to the length of our separation. My valued friends were become venerable, with the children of those sons playing round their knees, who were themselves scarce more than children on my last visit to that dear scene. It is on returning to a place, after a very long absence, that we scarcely credit our eyes, when they show us a new generation rising up in the interim. The intervening space is annihilated, by the strong impression we retain of the living objects we had left there, and by the sameness of the local ones.

I found good and generous Mrs Sykes slowly recovering from a dangerous and long illness, and her engaging and accomplished daughter feeble and languid, by the long pressure of filial anxieties and exertions, upon a very delicate constitution. They obligingly offered to accompany me to Bridlington, but were too unwell to encounter the

company and hurries of Scarborough. My promise to Mr Dewes interfering, we agreed, that if he and his party left that coast before my aqueous discipline was performed, as to duration, I should complete it on this less splendid shore, where they agreed to meet me.

My eighteen days residence, and nine immersions on the more picturesque and gayer strand, agreed with my health. Right pleasantly would those days have passed, but for the concern I felt, that Mr Dewes received not the hoped-for benefit from sea-air. I spent my time at Scarborough almost wholly with that agreeable party which had allured me thither. Mr Dewes' disappointment shortening their stay, I found, on their departure, that the chief pleasures of the scene had vanished;—so hither I came on the 5th instant, Mr and Mrs Sykes having arrived a few hours before me. Two agreeable young ladies of their intimacy, Miss Horners of Hull, joined us the ensuing day. Thus are we a party of five in the same lodgings, and on the edge of the vast German Ocean; we inhale its saline gales, and hope they will be salubrious. As yet I have only been able to bathe twice, so angrily turbulent have I found *ma mere*. A boarded pier, one hundred and twenty yards in length, and on which nine people may walk abreast, juts out into her bosom,

not fifty paces from us, and balances all the other superiorities of Scarborough. The sea-sands are always either too wet or too heavy for comfortable walking,—but this pier forms an admirable public walk. There all the company of the place resort,—and there the ocean gales rise on all sides around us, freely as we could taste them in a boat. Here we walk or sit, very often in the day, frequently when the huge billows are raging and lashing the pier on every side.

Several families of consequence are at this place, with whom, being known to Mrs Sykes, we exchange morning visits. In the evenings I generally read aloud, while the rest work.

Pretty Mrs John Gisbon is of the number, with her boyish-looking, but highly intelligent husband. They were so good to take me yesterday in their coach an airing on the edges of the cliffs. —The finest and mildest sun, shed his brilliants in the mighty waters, on which all the winds lay asleep. When the horses turned homewards, we descended to the sands, and observed the pretty grey and white seagulls taking their noon-meal of shrimps on the edges of the waves, that but just purled up the shore. The vast sea was of a bright blueish-green, verifying Ossian's description, when he says, "the blue waves of Ullin rolled in light."

But, O! the delusive smiles of that capricious element! In the afternoon, the wind rising and blowing east, the billows began to chafe and foam. Their rage increased as the evening came on, and then it was that "the waters grew dark as they rose." It was the spring-tides, and they surged to the shore with a prodigious and turbulent flood.

Mr Daniel Sykes joined our party, since I began this letter some days ago, by engagements prevented from finishing it sooner. This young gentleman and myself have not met since his school-days. In the beauty of his face, and the polish of his address, he rises, to my observation, the flower of the Westella house. All its sons have merit, one of them has genius and wit, but he only has the graces; nor exist they alone, or with a frivolous mind, but are the fascinating ornaments of distinguished talents and generous worth.

So the bloody Marat is fallen by female heroism, and the Generals Custine and Miranda are condemned, with the legislator Brissot! Thus it is, that the godless and lawless republic, like Sin, makes the wages of his servants death. Adieu.

LETTER LXXX.

Rev. Dr Parr.

Bridlington, August 17, 1793.

The last letter with which you honoured me, arrived a few days before I left Scarborough. The rapid course of the intervening period, and those engrossing engagements which gave it wings, have been regretted, because they prevented my earlier acknowledgments of your obliging attention.

Alas! I have no good news to tell you of our highly intelligent and excellent friend, Mr Dewes. The patriot pleasure which he felt from the surrender of Valenciennes to the British arms and their allies by those of the lawless and godless republic, could not exterminate the sad disease which preys upon his frame. Not thinking himself better for his residence on the gay cliff, nor for its saline breezes, he shortened his stay, and is now at Calwich. His letter to me from that place, contains a mournful presentiment concerning the event of his disease, which pained my very

heart. My best hope is, that the depression on his spirits magnifies his danger; but he seems very ill.

When you favour me with your company at Lichfield, you will meet with little of the provocation you apprehend from its stalled divinities. I think they would shun you for a double reason: your abilities, which they would fear,—your politics, which they would hate,—or, if they abstained from what must prove such a suicide on the pleasures of the ingenious and ingenuous, they would at least decline entering the political lists with so formidable an opponent.

We Lichfieldians are at present, it is true, very unanimous in our orthodoxy and in our loyalty. The distinctions of whig and tory, that once, and long bred much ill blood amongst us, have lost their force during the elapse of many years; and, in these perilous times, which have so clearly shown the mischiefs of plausible theories, they are totally dissolved. One common sentiment pervades our bosoms, which have, perhaps, not perfect congeniality on other themes. We feel grateful for the protection, freedom, and comfort we enjoy beneath the influence of a constitution, which has given to our little island such mighty consequence in the consideration of Europe through a century's course; whatever of human, and therefore

inevitable imperfection, may be found in its construction by those Utopian searchers, who call themselves philosophers, and who would beguile us from our safe-holds by visionary plans of unattainable excellence.

I was born and educated in whiggism, if Mr Dewes was not. I have never forsaken its principles. In *my* infancy and youth, the discontented and factious were called tories. They abused government, and styled it corrupt on account of its changed form from kingly despotism to balanced influence. The discontented and factious of *these* days call themselves Whigs, and abuse government because it has not that complete purity, ill suited to the vices of mankind, bestowing upon the quiet and the grateful the title of Tories; but when, some forty years back, they assigned to such the name of Whigs, and avowed their detestation of the English Revolution, our constitution was essentially all it is now. Tests and septennial parliaments, their present reprobation, existed then.

Beautiful edifices of polity are raised by men of dazzling abilities, assuming the title of philosophers. But, to render them safe on experiment, as they are plausible in theory, mankind must have been created, not as they are, mulish, selfish, and malevolent, but ductile, disinterested, and kind.

Thus these fair and promising edifices, being built on sandy foundations, fall, on trial, into an heap of shapeless ruins, and, in that fall, overwhelm freedom, security, subordination, mercy, and piety; as the example of France evinces.

If to be a philosopher is, as I understand it to be, a lover of wisdom; if to be a patriot is to be a lover of the country we inhabit, to be zealous for her interests, and tenacious of her glory, then the most ignorant amongst the contented and the grateful, have more real claim to those appellations than the daring innovators who, with the dreadful example before their eyes, seek to lift the flood-gates of a torrent which they know they have no power to bank up again.

So the regicides are renewing their bloody work, and exciting new detestation, which, I trust, will edge, with yet more resistless force, the swords of chastising justice.

You received my last letter, directed to Hopton, where your visit would diffuse the glow of social and intellectual pleasures. When you honour my house, you will not find the luxuries of Hopton, but all the cordiality of its welcome.—Adieu!

LETTER LXXXI.

MR SAVILLE.

Bridlington, Monday, Aug. 19, 1793.

AMIDST the pleasures your ingenious letter of the 10th instant gives me, I perceive, with regret, that you think the recovery of a sufficient degree of health to resume your musical engagements improbable. Alas! I hoped that brighter prospects had arisen to you from the placid bosom of the Weymouth ocean.

I grieve to say, that Mr Dewes still remains very ill; and that the storm of Saturday night was fatal to two ships, one on the Scarborough coast, and one on this. The tide of the ensuing morning brought one floating mangled corse to the beach. Yesterday the sun shone clear and bright, but the wind was north-east, and blew keenly, and the tempest of the night had left the sea in tumult. At twelve we went out an airing in Mr Gisbon's coach. On our return, at two, it was high-water, and Mr Gisbon ran to inform us that the ocean had, in our absence, arisen to the grandest-possible height, short of those dire storms

that scatter death and ruin from their wings. The latter part of the pier, that which juts farthest into the deep, was perfectly dry; but, in passing over the front part, by the beach, I was covered and wet with the descent of that spray which the thundering billows, that almost stunned me as I proceeded, had thrown up, at least ten yards above the floor of the pier. With the explosion of cannon, they burst on all sides upon the rocks, and hurled their showers of silver an unimaginable height, to the winds which had enraged them. Many of them, repelled by the rocks, turned, in pyramidal columns, upon their furious successors, dashing into their bosoms with tremendous roar, smoking clouds of snowy foam flying up in the conflict. Conflagration only, when it is of resistless force, can give to the terrible graces such prodigious animation. Never, in my sight, were the dreadful and the beautiful so blended, for the sun shone full upon the vast and turbid billows, and upon the silvery shower they threw up. Above twenty ships stood out to sea a few miles from us, pinned to the bottom of the tumultuous ocean; upright and still they stood, in motionless dread of being blown from their anchors.

Tuesday Night.

This morning we went, a large party,—Mr Gisbon's coach, Mrs Sykes' chaise, and Mr R. Sykes' phaeton,—to see the contrast of a sweet sequestered umbrageous glen, where Lady Strictland has erected a farm-house and a dairy-house in the Dutch style. A brook intersects the circular meadow, and flows around the buildings, resembling the dikes of Holland, with Dutch bridges over it. The whole scene is said to be completely Belgic, and, as such, is a curious spectacle to English eyes. You would be charmed with the cool and fragrant cleanliness of the dairy, and with the red-breast asylum. Poetic inscriptions, beautifully simple, deprecate, at the shady entrance, school-boy depredations for the first,—and for the second, invite the golden-bosomed songsters to what is justly called "their peaceful happy home."

I am just returned from the pier, which has shown this capricious and formidable element in an appearance, by me, as yet, unbeheld, however common. Upon its gently curling waves, the moon looks from her blue and cloudless vault in full brightness. Her reflection makes a pool of milky-light upon the sea beneath, on the edge of the horizon; from whence a zig-zag train of brilliants, of the apparent breadth of twenty yards,

glitters across the ocean, to the very foot of the pier on which we stand.

> " Thus lovely, on her watery throne,
> Shines the fair arbitress of floods."

Adio !

LETTER LXXXII.

MRS GRANVILLE.

Lichfield, Sept. 6, 1793.

You are by this time arrived at Wellsburn, my dear Mrs Granville. I requested from you a line of information, if any favourable symptom appeared in the health of one of the best and most esteemed of men. I said I would interpret your silence as a negative upon hopes so precious to me; but my heart is too much in the subject, my anxiety too painful, to avoid soliciting information how he bore his journey, and how you found him on your arrival.

An ingenious medical gentleman here assures me, that a patient of his, equally a valetudinarian

through life, and in no respect more athletic than your brother, has been a considerable time afflicted with the same complaint; that his pains have been relieved by daily applications of the surgical kind, which are not tormenting; that the disease, though an oppressive one, is not of inevitable tendency to shorten existence; that if the sufferer, like his friend, is too feeble to bear those powerful medicines which might effect a cure, the distemper may yet be assuaged, as to its consequences, by art and care. God grant that dear Mr Dewes may find them effectual to procure a tolerable degree of comfort! such as shall still leave life desirable on balanced considerations;—his intellectual pleasures; the habitual exercise of his benevolence;—the proofs he will receive of that affection which his virtues have inspired, and his talents augmented in the breasts of all he loves, opposed to the pressure of some degree of bodily pain and periodical uneasiness. If the disorder can, as I trust it will, be thus softened, he must permit us ardently to wish that we may not prematurely lose the happiness of his society, nor his general contemporaries the benefit of an example, more excellent than they will readily find supplied, when the light of his spirit shall be extinguished in our sphere.

I say nothing to you about the music at Derby.

Somewhat it might sooth, but could not delight hearts oppressed by sympathetic pain. O! that you may bring less apprehensive sensibilities a few weeks hence; and, by the side of our beloved invalid, honour my habitation, and listen to the services and anthems of our little cathedral, where they are performed so well.

I did not quit your Arcadian scenes at * Crystal Calwich till near an hour after they had lost their kind proprietors. In the clearer light of morning, my eye was attracted, and my attention as much engrossed, as in my then frame of mind it could be, by the fine pictures in the drawing room, indistinctly seen the preceding evening. With many a sigh I left the lovely precincts, hoping to revisit them in happier hours.

Do you think I shall be permitted to take a copy of Dr Parr's last admirable letter to Mr Dewes on his present illness? The Doctor's fine imagination, his discriminating powers, and forcible eloquence, could not be better employed than in eulogy, just to its object, and honourable to himself.

Adieu! dear and ever amiable Mrs Granville,

* So called by the author from that clear and expansive lake, on the green margin of which stands Mr Granville's beautiful seat, near Ashbourn, in Derbyshire.—*S.*

and believe me, with still augmented regard, your ever obliged friend and servant.

LETTER LXXXIII.

MRS T———.

Lichfield, Sept. 10, 1793.

LONG silences, mutual, though involuntary, will result from connections and correspondences unavoidably increasing as life lengthens, while the decay of health, and the ebb of spirits, render us more and more incompetent to the accumulated toil of the pen.

I grieve to find that you still continue to languish in the almost constant deprivation of life's first blessing; and it surprises me that your constitution should be so fruitful amidst its habitual weakness. May your children repay you, by their duty and welfare, for the pain of bearing, and the fatigue of nursing them!—and also for the more corrosive pains of mind, which * Mr

* After having convinced Mrs T. of the truth of Arian principles, though she had been educated in those of the church, he abjured them for Quakerism.—*S.*

T——'s veering piety, and consequent inquietude, must cost you.

Last week restored me to my home, from a three months excursion, in better health than I left it. My time of absence was divided between Buxton, Scarborough, and Bridlington Quay. At the two former, some pleasing, intelligent, and amiable people emerged to my attention from that mass of ostentation, ignorance, and folly, which encumbers these celebrated and crowded public places. More equal, rational, and social intercourse prevails at the latter; and but for the interesting friendship of a large and charming party, which I joined at Scarborough, I should infinitely have preferred Bridlington.

On my return home I passed through York, and heard choral service in the noblest cathedral in the world; at least in my estimation, who prefer, in religious edifices, the Gothic to the Grecian style of architecture. The curious luxuriance of the chiseled ornaments in the noble choir, and in those magnificent aisles; their fair proportion; their majestic amplitude; the chastised, the glooming, the awful light, shed through their "storied windows," afforded the utmost gratification to my eye, and almost annihilated, on my imagination, the spruce elegance of our dear new-tricked cathedral, and its obtrusive lights:

but if sight perceived the undoing superiority of York Minster, my ear acknowledged the yet more transcendent harmonic advantages of the Gothic boast of Lichfield. The organ of York Minster is a box of whistles in comparison, and the scrannel tones, and squalid garb of its singing-men, are, indeed, most unworthy of that matchless choir. Nor can it be otherwise, till the disgraceful scantiness of their salary shall be augmented. Nor less unworthy of the solemn scene was the miserable reading of the clergyman who officiated. More than ever was I charmed, last Sunday, at this cathedral, with the rich flood of harmony poured by our full-voiced choir. It gave us that fine anthem, the Dedication of the Temple, in a noble style indeed. Mr Saville's voice was never more clear and full, nor did one discordant note in the other two who joined him, abate the exquisite beauty and grandeur of that composition. Our noble organ, now soft as the gale of summer, now loud as its thunder, completed the effect.

As to what you say about Griffith's asserted discovery, that William and Margaret was a very ancient poem, I am absolutely certain that it was a pretence. I forget the nature of the circumstances by which he affected to ascertain its prior existence to that of its author, Mallet; but I per-

fectly remember that I gave no sort of credit to them at the time, from the opposition of internal evidence, viz. that no man of common sense—and Griffith was more than that—could judge so wretchedly as to approve the frittered alterations, with their assumed originality, but from that self-flattery, which often makes authors prefer their own botching to the genuine texture of a fine work which they attempt to improve. I remember one of those alterations. Mallet wrote,—

> " Her face was like an April morn,
> Clad in a wintry cloud."

The pretended original has

> " Her face was like an April morn,
> Dimm'd by a scattering cloud."

Griffith descants upon the fancied superiority of his second line, in which all the chill horror of Mallet's fine simile is lost. But this suppositious evidence has sunk in oblivion, and Mallet's fame remains in full possession of its fairest chaplet.

Sir Joseph Mawby, who, in the supplement to the Gentleman's Magazine for 1791, produces, with much parade of approbation, envious posthumous strictures on this beautiful ballad, by one Hesiod Cook, a forgotten hero of the Dunciad,

contemporary with its author, does not attack the originality of Mallet's claim to it, but merely display's his own and his dead dunce's beetleism to those pathetic graces with which it has charmed the public so long. You remember I answered these strictures in the magazine for the ensuing March.

I am afraid you are mistaken in the supposed honour and honesty of Griffith; and that the general tenor of his conduct warrants a less generous motive for his refusing five hundred pounds for permission that the bookseller should affix the name of Sterne to an imitative work of his. It is more probable that he was withheld by reluctance to resign the glory of having written with a considerable portion of Sternean spirit, rather than by conscientious scruple.

Griffith and his wife did not live together during several years prior to his death. Have you forgetten an event of which the public prints of the day were so full? His seduction of a girl of fortune and consequence, in his grand climacteric, and her elopement with him? I have always understood that he lived with that fair unfortunate the remainder of his days. Thus ended the boasted attachment of Henry and Frances, whose published letters were so much admired.

There is little reason to suppose, that regret for

the loss of this faithless husband shortened Mrs Griffith's days. Indeed she survived him several years.

I had once a week's personal acquaintance with them. About the year 1776, they were in Lichfield, on a visit to Colonel Griffith, then quartered here. With Henry I afterwards corresponded. He used to call me Frances the second. I smiled at his groundless vanity in giving me that title. I could not acquire the feelings of friendship towards him, and scorned to profess them, though we used to write to each other with gay familiarity. I thought I distinctly perceived a libertine imagination, inestimable always, and nauseous in an ugly fellow, that wore a wig, who was covered with snuff, and apparently past middle life. It did not seem conceivable to me, that he should ever have possessed an exterior naturally capable of exciting that impassioned fondness, which glows through the Emma-like letters of the real Frances, before she became his wife. Judge then, what must be my astonishment to find him seducing, some years after, youth and beauty to sacrifice principle and fame, and all the fair prospects of affluence, that she might live in his withered arms!

Ah, poor Miss Williams! encircled with a nation of blood-hounds, from whom she dares not

attempt to escape! There can be no doubt of the detestation which a mind like her's must feel of the king's murder, and of all the other massacres—but she must deplore and detest these events in guarded silence;—the least murmur of disapprobation would probably be fatal to her life. So ends the boasted liberty of France! I am happy that my letter to her, in the Gentleman's Magazine for last February, pleased you.

Remember me to Mr T—— with kindness, and assure yourself of my unabated regard.

LETTER LXXXIV.

Rev. Richard Sykes.

Lichfield, Oct. 1, 1793.

A letter so ingenious, so interesting, so animated, and from a friend long valued, could not but be welcome to me;—such letters cannot arrive too often, on the indulgent terms you propose; but I am, from the accumulation of my epistolary connections, ruined for a correspondent, since it is impossible for me to write to any individual more than once in four or five months—and what is such

seldomness worth as intercourse? Already is my health perceivably impaired by this employment; yet I write scarce any thing but letters, and I am reluctantly oblig.d to decline very flattering proposals of correspondence from new acquaintance, even of the most alluring talents, and the most engaging virtues.

Those advantages which you too generously impute to me, and term them obligations, are perhaps chiefly ideal; yet, having always believed the warm, the natural illusions of the youthful heart its best preservation against the destructive taint of indiscriminate and dispassionate sensuality—if indeed your partial opinion of me gave that more refined bias to your thoughts, your manners, and your character,—I will venture to indulge the agreeable idea, that those hours, which, in your "ambiguous years," we passed together, were to you rather of auspicious, than of baneful influence.

I esteem you for acknowledging, that the poignance of your feelings, and your poetic taste, have been sources of delight. It has ever appeared to me false and unthankful retrospect, that remembers only the pains with which nature taxes our high-wrought pleasures; that represents sensibility as an evil, and envies the sullen rest of stoi-

cism. "Far be from me, and from my friends, such frigid philosophy!

> ——— "With an alter'd brow,
> Lours the false world, and the fine spirit grieves.
> No more the morning-beams of hope illume
> The faded scene. Then to ourselves we say,
> Come, bright imagination, come! resume
> Thy orient lamp—with recompensing ray,
> Shine on the mind—and pierce its gathering gloom,
> With all the fires of intellectual day."

You speak to me of your native impetuosity, and lament it as a fault. A fault, when too much indulged, it certainly must be. With you and me, that temperament is mutual, and it is real wisdom, and an owed duty to check its excesses;—but let us not idly regret its inherence in our minds, since Rousseau has justly said—"It is that heat from which light is inseparable." Without it, my dearest father's endeavours would have been fruitless to inspire you with a taste for that * poet, who has but two equals in the world—for I can never believe Virgil, on any ground of equality, as a sublime original poet, with Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton.

You are ingenuous in acknowledging the errors of your temper; but there are some things which

* Milton.

we are glad to conceal and gloss over to ourselves; —and we often shelter our indolence under complaints of our nature. Ah! Richard,—for you must allow me the habits of former days—your epitaph, which turns the other side of the medal, convinces me, that you have "hid ten talents under a napkin," or your writings would have enriched the fanes of the British muses. It appears to me a lovely little specimen of poetic talents.

I think with you, that Miss F. Cayley's genius is considerable, while the native elegance of her taste leaves, respecting the few verses I have seen of hers, young as she is, little employment for criticism. This age teems with poetic genius, but Johnson's Lives of the Poets, where wit makes envious detraction appear just judgment, has, by inspiring a general contempt for that species of writing, destroyed poetic taste. Their admirers forget, that the very Johnson, who in them speaks so disdainfully of many of our most justly admired bards, has pronounced, in his Rasselas, that to write poetry well, is the highest attainment of the human understanding.

The art and the artists are now fallen on evil days, and amidst minds, whose owlish darkness to its lustres is avowed and gloried in. Your climate is not, in that respect, more Bœotian than ours, or than most others. Few, who are not

capable of writing poetry, take pleasure in its perusal or recitation;—and amongst those who do write verse, the jealousy of rival talents too often produces that depreciating spirit, which betrays, in its ungenerous and short-sighted policy, the common cause.

The apathy of those who do not themselves possess the gift, or have neglected its cultivation, is, in all but fools, as unnatural as it is stupid—for poetry is unquestionably the language of nature; and, as such, ought to interest and impress, where it may not be able to inspire. Our very peasants show that the seeds of poetry exist in the rude soil of their minds. Awaken their passions or excite their wonder, and you will often hear them speaking in metaphor, which is the poetic essence. Measure and rhyme are not essentials, they are only its dress. Will the day be fine, after this misty morning? said I to a labourer in the Peak. Ay, Madam, replied he, the old mountain is pulling off his nightcap.

When we inquired of the sailors, who were getting a wreck to shore, in Filey-Bay, if the sea had been uncommonly violent that unfortunate night? instead of a simple affirmative, one of them exclaimed, "It rolled mountains."

When I asked the postilion, who drove me to Scarborough, and who, I found, had been a seaman,

whether they were not all very happy to see the coast after a long voyage? None but a sailor, said he, knows the comfort of spying the first *glooming* of the land.

I am convinced that the poetic talent is a blessing to its possessor, and that to cultivate it habitually, is an incessant source of delight. Since you do me the honour, on Miss F. Cayley's account, of consulting me on the best means of cultivation, I advise our young friend to get by heart, at every leisure interval when she reads or walks alone, a portion of poetic writing from our best authors, observing what are those life-strokes which bring its pictures to our eye, and what the arrangement of those accents which give smoothness, and of those which energize the numbers: that the iambics give perfect melody, while the trochaics gain in spirit and picturesque effect, what they may lose in smoothness—and that to use them both, in judicious variation, completes the perfection of verse, whether blank or in rhyme. If she is not familiar with these technical terms, you will explain them to her. Here are four beautiful lines, which are all pure iambics:

"These lead the troops that rocky Aulis yields,
And Eteon's hills, and Hyrie's watery fields,"

Where Python, Daulis, Cyparissus, stood,
And fair Lilaea, views the rising flood."—*Pope's Homer.*

Lines where the trochaic accent chiefly prevails—

" Gnomes, how you gaz'd, when from her wounded side,
Now, where the south sea rolls its waste of tide,
Rose, on swift wheels, the moon's refulgent car,
Circling the solar orb, a sister star,
Dimpled with vales, with shining hills emboss'd,
Rolling round earth, her airless realms of frost."—*Darwin.*

The above lines commence with that accent; in the ensuing ones, it prevails wholly:

" Ruin seize thee, ruthless king;
Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail."

The ear will better bear the long continuance of the iambic accent, unmixed with the trochaic, especially in the ten-feet couplet, than the lavish prevalence of that more animated emphasis. Perhaps Darwin's versification is too profuse of the latter. Dryden uses it too seldom. Pope seems to me to have been more judicious in the application of trochaics than Dryden in his abstinence,—than Darwin in his plenitude.

Miss Cayley will observe, that frequently to begin a line, and frequently to close one with a verb-active, gives impressive strength to versifi-

cation. She will feel, too, the awakening power of the apostrophe and of the interrogatory style, together with the grandeur of the imperative. Also, the superiority which results from giving a passage rather in the present than in the past tense. Dryden was not sufficiently aware of this superiority; Pope knew it well. We may sometimes, not unhappily, slide from the past into the present tense in the same passage, but the reverse never.

She will remark, that pleasing effects are often produced by judicious discords in poetry, as well as in music—such as varying the measure, at intervals, by two syllables that should have equal emphasis, and which may be placed in any part of the line—instance:

> What green cliff blossoms o'er thy place of rest.
> And roams the gaunt wolf o'er the dreary plain.
> *A. Seward.*

"What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn."

"Together both ere the high lawns appear'd."—*Milton.*

"Shall scorn thy pale shrine glimmering near."—*Collins.*

And she will feel the frequent happiness of transposition; which, however, should not be used wantonly, and only where it may produce some picturesque or impressive effect. Darwin says,

" Loud o'er her whirling floods Charybdis roars."

Avoiding the transposition, the line had been less animated :

" O'er whirling floods Charybdis loudly roars."

Suffer me to point out one great essential towards acquiring facility in composition, viz. the writing alternately in different measures, and in great variety of measure. Self-set tasks of this sort are very useful. Choose either the eight or ten feet couplet, or the elegiac, the sonnet, or one of the various forms of the lyric, for the vehicle of ideas, which, on arising in the mind, seem capable of appearing to advantage in the poetic dress. Lay a fine poem in the chosen measure on your table ; read it over aloud ; endeavour to catch its spirit ; observe its pauses and general construction. Thus, a young poet should compose as a student in painting paints, from the best models, not with servile minuteness, but with generous emulation and critical attention.

How far I am qualified to give these instructions may be very questionable ; but these are the habits by which I cultivated my own little poetic stock. If the harvest has been tolerably competent, it is to them that I am indebted for the produce. Dr Darwin tells people he never read

or studied poetry. The assertion is demonstrably affected and untrue, from the artful accuracy and studied resplendence of his style; and I know, that through all the years he lived at Lichfield, he was in the habit of amusing a great part of his leisure hours by the most sedulous study of this exalted science, and by very critical attention to the poetic writing of others.

If Shakespeare's talents were the miracles of uncultured intuition, we feel, that neither Milton's, Pope's, Akenside's, Gray's, or Darwin's were such, but that poetic investigation, and long familiarity with the best writers in that line, cooperated to produce their excellence. What folly, then, of the wise, is a disingenuousness so glaring!

I hope your Masonic week at Westella proved pleasanter than such periods have generally proved with that proud miser of his intellectual wealth. Your application of the adversity-passage in Shakespeare to him, is one of the happiest I have known. It comes within Johnson's definition of wit, or, perhaps, he would more properly have termed it genius: "The bringing those things together, between which there is no natural relationship, but of which, when brought into contact, every one perceives the fitness." I give

the meaning, not the words of the passage, which have escaped my memory.

I wrote to Mr Hayley lately. My letter contained a jocular passage to the following effect: "One of my Yorkshire friends, a gentleman of considerable talents, conversing twice this summer, at Derby, with Mrs Hayley, returned to us on the coast, enchanted with her wit and spirit. He thinks it impossible the effervescing cordial should ever cloy. If you could contrive to make his wife, who is a very fine woman, elope with you, there might be a double divorce, and he would certainly marry Mrs Hayley. Pray, if the Hymeneal chain has galled you a little, would not that be a much pleasanter way of dissolving it, than that it should be broken by the dark hand of the shapeless despot?" Now, if there were an atom of seriousness in all this, what admirable morality it would be! I have not yet answered the letter you were so good to bring me from Mrs Hayley. When I do, she shall certainly know how high she stands in your esteem.

My health is not at Lichfield what it was on the coast. I begin to fear the good effects of my journey, and watery discipline, will not be lasting. With the mists of these autumnal mornings and evenings, my difficulty of breathing has returned.

I thank you and dear Mrs R. Sykes for persisting in an idea so pleasing to me, as the inclusion of Lichfield in your next summer's tour; nor less kind do I take the mutual wish you express to see me again your guest: Remembrance of the social pleasures I tasted in Yorkshire, must form a powerful spell to lure me thither again; and the days I passed in your pleasant mansion were not the least interesting of that agreeable excursion.

What a length of letter! I feel it less difficult to be silent to those I love, than to speak to them briefly. Say the kindest things for me to the numerous branches of the Westella family, as well as within that house of my long love,

"Where oft for me the cheerful morning rose."

LETTER LXXXV.

Mrs Hayley.

Lichfield, Oct. 5, 1793.

In reading your last agreeable letter, my dear Madam, I felt extremely glad to see you acknow-

ledge that the summer was passing pleasantly. It is too seldom that people express a conscious enjoyment of the present. While regret is busy with the past, and expectation with the future, Ennui usurps the place of Cheerfulness, and thinks coldly of the social, and yawns through the studious hour. You are happy in a sprightlier temperament, and grateful in confessing the pleasures it affords you.

Glad also am I to find that my old friend, Mr R. Sykes, stands so high in your good graces. His wit and worth deserve that honour. He desires me to assure you of his esteem, and best wishes, and of his fervent desire to converse with you often. I wrote to the dear bard lately, and rallied him upon the intenseness with which Sykes expresses his delight in your imagination, and in the gaiety of your spirit.

While surrounded at Bridlington by those beloved beings of the Westella house, we all formed a very pleasing intimacy with Mr and Mrs John Gisbon. He has the kind of disposition, the species of talents, which I should most desire in the person I wish to call friend. The fair Millicent has been very fortunate.

> " She did not blunt on fops her beauty's dart,
> But boasts the triumph of a lettered heart :"

And I perceive, on intimacy, a gentleness and goodness about her, which promises to deserve the blessings of her lot, and to secure his happiness who chose her.

Yesterday brought me an odd, though ingenious letter, from a Mr Geary of Leominster, of whom, except one or two former letters on literary subjects, I know nothing. His last exhorts me to vindicate Miss Hannah More's character from the malevolent aspersions which, he says, Mrs Smith has cast upon it in her novel, Desmond, under the title of Mrs Manby.

I have not read Desmond, and this is the first hint that has reached me of any such attack. If it is so, Mrs Smith has done very unwisely, as well as unjustly; but Hannah More wants no champion; her virtues and talents stand far above the reach of such senseless calumny,

> "Which will pass by her as the idle wind,
> Which she respects not."

Have you read Helen Williams's new publication? It is finely written, and infinitely interesting; but I tremble for her life in that murderous city, from the bold truths this work contains in testimony against those detestable Jacobins. It is to be regretted that she is not, by this time, more aware that anarchy, with all its tyrannous

mischiefs, must result from the prevalence of democratic influence.

You would be sorryish to hear, that poor Moll Cobb, as Dr Johnson used to call her, is gone to her long home. If you saw the ridiculous, puffing, hyperbolic character of her in the public papers, it would make you stare and smile at the credence due to newspaper portraits. Those, however, who draw them in colours so false and glaring, are very reprehensible. This was the disgrace of a pen capable of far better things than such a tribute of gross and mean flattery to the vanity of the surviving Relation. Its author well knew the uniform contempt with which Johnson spoke both of the head and heart of this personage, well as he liked the convenience of her chaise, the "taste of her sweet-meats and strawberries," * and the idolatry of her homage.

Nauseous, therefore, was the public and solemn mention of Johnson's friendship for Mrs Cobb, of whose declaration respecting her, in a room full of company here, the panegyrist had so often heard—"How should,"—exclaimed Johnson, "how should Moll Cobb be a wit! Cobb has read nothing, Cobb knows nothing; and where nothing has been put into the brain, nothing can

* See his Letters to Mrs Piozzi, Letters the 114th and 154th.—*S.*

come out of it to any purpose of rational entertainment." Somebody replied,—Then why is Dr Johnson so often her visitor?—" O! I love Cobb—I love Moll Cobb for her impudence."

The despot was right in his premises, but his conclusion was erroneous. Little as had been put into Mrs Cobb's brain, much of shrewd biting and humorous satire was native in the soil, and has often amused very superior minds to her own. Of that superiority, however, Dr Johnson excepted, she had no consciousness; her ignorance and self-sufficience concealed it effectually. She was a very selfish character, nor knew the warmth of friendship, nor the luxury of bestowing. Thus has her monumental wall been daubed by very untempered mortar indeed. Yet, to her we may apply what Henry V. says of Falstaff,—

> " We could have better spared a better man;
> O! we shou'd have a heavy miss of thee,
> If we were much in love with vanity."

Adio!

LETTER LXXXVI.

Mrs Mompessan.

Lichfield, Oct. 31, 1793.

You have done my letter to Helen Williams great honour, in thinking it worth exportation to Germany, and in bespeaking for it, through the channel of your nephew, * Heathcote, the attention of her Electors and Princes. I hear the papers mention poor Helen, and her mother and sisters, being included in the order for imprisoning all the English, in contempt of that decree which enrolled Miss Williams a citizen of France, and presented her with the civic crown.

Alas! it is thus that she dearly pays for that misleading enthusiasm which led her to follow the wandering fire of imaginary freedom, far from the safe-holds of her native country, amidst the rocks and whirlpools of an overturned empire, and into the convulsed chaos, consequent upon adopting the levelling system.

* Our Envoy at the Court of Bons.—*S.*

——————" O! when degree is shaken,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
Then enterprise is sick. How cou'd communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhood in cities;
The peaceful commerce of divided shores,
The primogeniture, and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But, by degree, stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows!—each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Wou'd lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sap of all this solid globe;
Strength would be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son would strike his father dead;
Force would be right, or rather right and wrong,
Between whose endless jar justice presides,
Wou'd lose their names, and so wou'd justice too.
Then every thing includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, a universal wolf,
Thus doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up itself.
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
Follows the choaking;
And this neglection of degree it is,
That by a pace goes backward, in a purpose
It hath to climb. The General's disdain'd
By him one step beneath—he by the next,
The next by him below,—so every step,
Exampled by the first pace that is sick
Of its superior, grows to an envious fever
Of pale and bloodless emulation."

Thus did our immortal Shakespeare foresee and describe such miseries as are now convulsing unhappy France, the certain consequence of democratic influence preponderating. So forcibly does he warn mankind against seeking to destroy the distinctions of rank, and prophecies the result of such state empiricism, by the power of that intuitive wisdom which enabled him to feel, express, and paint the sentiments, conduct, and manners of almost all the various dispositions of the human race, in every situation, whether imaginary, or recorded in story, history, or romance.

But to return to my ill-starred friend. When conscious of Miss Williams's perilous situation, I saw that she had again published on the affairs of France, I sickened at the intelligence. That she should venture to print any thing on that subject, which was not in vindication of the demons of anarchy, I thought in the highest degree improbable. To defend them was to expose herself to the just indignation of every English man and woman, who are neither fools, base, or insane. As I then feared for her fame, now, after reading her book, I tremble for her life. Reaching France through the medium of translation, it lays her head on the guillotine. She must certainly have planned an escape to England, which this imprisoning edict will too certainly frustrate, and has

sent out this work as her pallinode and harbinger, to smooth her reception here, and apologize for the too confident triumph of her former volumes on the French Revolution. Without abandoning her first principles, this last work traces their direful degeneracy in the fiend-infested land, and bears intrepid witness against the Jacobine faction, which has betrayed its rising interests, and plunged France in eternal infamy;—taught her to exceed, in tyranny and murderous oppression, all the records of despotism, and extinguished the sun of liberty in blood.

Nature and reason are sick of that wretched country, at whose impious and awless guilt the astonished world stands at gaze. Its hapless Queen has found a desirable close to her unparalleled wrongs and miseries, even though they terminated in her murder. That the monstrous injustice of the fiends who caused them, might be complete and evident to the whole world; that it might oblige even their dark-spirited defenders in this country to blush for them,—lo! incest with her infant son is brought forward as a specimen of the reality of those crimes on which they pronounce their detested sentence!

Thus it is that the betraying Spirit of evil instigates wickedness to the practice of absurdity, which divests it of the specious colouring of that

that virtue which it would assume; and while, to the sons of earth, it ascertains its practitioners to be his genuine disciples, becomes

"The loudest laugh of hell."

I hope we shall meet soon,—that your society will cheer and gild the darkest of the months, which will now so shortly be here. May neither disease or sorrow cloud or allay the joy I shall feel to bid you welcome.

LETTER LXXXVII.

Mrs M. Powys.

Lichfield, Nov. 17, 1793.

It gratifies me that you still retain that partial remembrance of Lichfield, which, in happier years, you used to express with a fervour most flattering to those for whose sake it was dear. I wish I could yet believe that this roof contained sufficient magnetism to lure you to its walls, when the marriage of Miss Caroline Smyth has narrow-

ed to one point your guardian cares, those solicitudes which have been so truly maternal.

I mentioned to you my interview with dear Lovel Edgeworth the summer before last. Again have I seen—but, alas, how seen him!—tortured with an incessant cough—his transparent cheeks tinged with a faint bloom, but hollow and iced over, as I fear, by the chillness of mortal disease. This only child of my lost Honora seems to possess, at seventeen, what his mother possessed, intellectual maturity, in the blossom of youth. The guest of Mr and Mrs E. Sneyd a few days, on his road to Dr Darwin, he accompanied them to a supper-party at my house. With what heart-felt pain I beheld his inevitable sufferings, I need not, indeed I cannot, describe.

Though I have, at times, perceived alarming symptoms of my last winter's disorders, yet, to lerably well at present, I flatter myself that my summer's tour has, in some degree at least, fortified my constitution

> " Against the time, when, 'mid the naked sprays,
> Barren as spears, the desolating wind
> Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes."

It is a peculiar season which enables us, in November, to say, " *against* the time of vegetable de-

solation,"—but hitherto we have seen little of it. The sullen tyrant of the year sleeps, while autumn encroaches upon his reign, and decks his months with her golden graces.

You know my enthusiasm for marine scenery. After a sixteen years inland residence, I approached, with awe-mixed delight, the mighty mass of animated water. Congenial to those pensive, though sweet sensations, which, even on its gayest beach, and in its calmest mood, it is calculated to inspire, was the reflection, how "many churlish winter.. and laughing springs,"—how many events, and, alas! how many deprivations I had experienced since last I strayed upon its shores.

The year has been a fine one, yet has its progress been thrice marked with mortal devastation in the stores of my friendship. In May I lost dear Lady Cresley. In August my new-formed attachment to amiable Mrs Sedley was nipt in its first flower; and this month has deprived the world of excellent Mr Dewes, who honoured me with a nine years' series of attentive and energetic amity. Never man bore an higher character for all those virtues that best adorn and ennoble human nature—unquestioned honour, unswerving integrity, unaffected piety; the bestowing spirit of Mr Day, without its acrimony; the politeness of Mr E————, without his insincerity. Mr

Dewes's understanding was quick and energetic; his taste for works of genius vivid and discriminating. As a scholar, "he was a ripe and good one." Greek, Latin, French, and Italian were familiar to him as his native tongue; of which he was so elegantly a master, as to read a prose author in any of them, in extempore English, unhesitating, correct, and happy as the most approved translations. I have often known him do this for hours together, and wondered at his facility. He was sufficiently master of the harpsichord to play in concert on that instrument, with readiness and skill. The whole county of Warwick looked up to his decisions, in all matters of legal right, during the many years in which he was chairman of its sessions. He lived in open, hospitable, and kind intercourse with all his neighbours. Over this constellation of talents and accomplishments, no vice cast the slightest shade. Judge how widely he is regretted, dying before age had tarnished one of those rare endowments.

So France wades deeper and deeper in public guilt, whose unheard-of atrocity confounds imagination, and astonishes belief.—A whole nation of Macbeths!

> ——— "That sup so full of horrors,
> Direness, familiar to their slaughterous thoughts,
> Cannot once startle them."

A nation that licences the plunder of property, that makes massacre its pastime, and atheism its faith. It is a perilous consideration. Adieu.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

Miss Brandish*

Dec. 6, 1793.

I THANK you for the two prints of our Close and Cathedral, as they existed in the days of my childhood. I have been long desirous of obtaining them, and am proportionably indebted to your goodness for that which could not be purchased. They are powerful talismans; and often, as I pass through the gallery, will they inspire those thrills of pensive recollection with which we look upon objects that forcibly recal the pleasing past. Its pleasures arise pure in the alembic of memory, extracted from all the dregs of alloy originally mingling with our most vivid delights, even with those of infancy. They are

* Daughter of Mr. Brandish, surgeon, of Alcester, Warwickshire.

brought back to me by a scene faithfully represented in one of these prints, and of which the real traces are lost in modern improvement. How often have my sister, our play-fellows, and myself, ran jocund around those little stubbed chesnut-trees that have so long ceased to blot the now-level green!—how often have we sprung up and bounded down the as long-vanished steps, with an elasticity so pleasant to experience, and of which accident deprived me in my youth!

The late Dr Langhorne wrote a beautiful poem, entitled Owen of Carron. It is but little known; for its graces, though simple, are too coy to please universally. It speaks of the pleasures of childhood with an enthusiasm congenial to those sensations which inspired the desire of possessing the views you have sent me:—

> "Where is the boy, by Carron's spring,
> Who bound his vale-flowers with the reed?
> Ah, me! those flowers he binds no more
> No early joy returns again!
> The parent, Nature, keeps in store,
> Her best joys for her little train."

Who is there, whose childhood was healthy and sportive, that will not agree with this author, that those joys *were* best?

Now as to Lichfield news—Events are scarce, and, had they been ever so plenteous, would have been transmitted to you by your friends of the galaxy, or milky-way, as Mr Inge pleasantly calls the white semicircle of the cathedral area. Shall I tell you of a lady who falls into talking trances in company, in which she appears repelling the enamoured solicitations of former rejected lovers? or of Mrs B——'s jealousy, excited by the long and eloquent billets which Miss A. writes to her ancient, honest, downright husband?—of the former's exclaiming in company, that she wonders what Miss A. means by sending flourishing notes, down three sides of paper, to her husband, —she is sure he never gives her, nor any other woman encouragement.

Are not these things almost too ridiculous for credibility?—yet people witness their serious existence. Thus it is that the intervals of the deal, at the card tables, are supplied with conversation, when, tired of the horrid miracles of guilt in France, they turn to the comic miracles of absurdity in our own circles. Not but the heads and hearts of the fair, the young, the gay, amongst us, are full of a subject more interesting to them at present than public tragedies, or private farces —the approaching masquerade at Drakelow—

" While, as new figures on their fancy throng,
They're every thing by starts, and nothing long,
But, in the space of one revolving hour,
Fly through all states of poverty, and power;
All forms on whom their varying mind can pitch,
Sultana, gipsy, goddess, nymph, and witch."

I was honoured with an invitation—but my life is too much in the yellow-leaf for such frolic-scenes. Adieu!

LETTER LXXXIX.

Mrs Hayley.

Nottingham, January 21, 1794.

I send you the requested impromptu to Sir Nigel Gresley, on declining the invitation to his splendid masque-ball. As poetry, I am conscious how little it is worth.

Do not show this hasty bagatelle to Dr Darwin. He would not endure a composition of twenty-six lines, which contains but *one* picture. His system demands, that all poetic apartments, from the saloon to the water-closet, should be covered with pictures, allowing not an inch space between

them. Few among the Doctor's admirers think more highly of his genius, or see more beauty in its effusions. I do not, however, subscribe to his first and governing principle, that every thing in verse should be imagery, but think that in poetry, as well as in every other science and art, ornament should be a secondary, not a primal consideration; —subservient to exalted thought, to just design;— to that noble simplicity, which can be great without effort, gay without glitter, and refined without perceptible elaboration. Dr Beattie's Minstrel maintains a similar axiom concerning the subordination of ornament.

Confined to my room by a severe cold, I have been enabled to perform my promise, which else the numerous and all-day engagements of Nottingham society had rendered difficult. There is, perhaps, more company at Derby than in Lichfield, and more than thrice as much in Nottingham as in either—probably than in both conjoined.

Nothing is more likely than that this fierce cough and these excoriated lungs of mine, should oblige me to return suddenly home, with all the pleasant purposes of this visit abridged. It will not be the first time that I have fled for my life, from very agreeable scenes.

Giovanni is expected at Mr Rawson's in a few days, should his precarious health permit, and H.

White is expected in this family. We have hopes that Mrs Smith will accompany her father. It will be very vexatious to find myself excluded by this spiteful disease, from the musical parties which their arrival may produce.

With concern, I see the newspapers announce the extinction of a great luminary in the world of letters. Yourself and Mr Hayley will mourn the death of Gibbon, from private friendship as well as from literary regret. To me he shone like one of those distant stars, whose light we view without perceiving its warmth.

LETTER XC.

H. F. Cary, Esq.

Lichfield, March 16, 1794.

Your letter, breathing the genuine spirit of friendship, has but recently met my eye. It arrived during my seven weeks excursion into Nottinghamshire. That I might not be perplexed with epistolary solicitudes, nor the possible good effects of changed air and scene upon my impaired constitution, be frustrated by eternal scribbling,

I gave orders, that letters arriving in my absence should not follow, but wait my return. In despite of this precaution, disease clouded my ramble, though it could not entirely repress the pleasure I felt in associating with many agreeable and intelligent friends at Nottingham. Few towns better understand how to animate the social hour. It is, however, my lot to have brought back not even the imperfect health I took out.

Sincerely do I thank you for the truly friendly and generous indignation you have felt and expressed for Boswell's unprovoked and malicious insolence. It would be contrary to the declared intention, expressed in my last letter to Urban, and certainly beneath me, to pursue this controversy farther. Idly immaterial as to its subject, it was begun by me but in defence of the veracity of my evidence, rudely called in question by this man, in his supplementary notes to the Life of Johnson, and pursued by him with such impertinent and insidious spite. It is, however, material, that I publickly convict the falsehood and arrogance of the Johnsonian adulator in one respect, so soon as I can procure the certainly existing means. You see him, in the magazine for January, denying that Johnson ever uttered that general slander on the poetic race, involved in his commendation of Watts, viz. that "he was one of

the few poets who could look forward with rational hope to the mercy of their God;" nay, seems to deny, that there ever was any published record of that base slander. Now, in print I declare I read it, though its precise situation now escapes my recollection. Well do I remember the indignant feelings it excited in my heart. The impression was in recent force, when I sent the last Benvolio letter to the Gentleman's Magazine, August 1787, and which records *verbatim* the unworthy sentence. Whether I then copied it from the despot's own writings, or from some of the various printed memorabilia of his conversation, I do not now know. If you, or any other friend, can recollect where it is inserted, the communication will oblige me. At present, I am too busily employed in more necessary concerns to re-read, for the purpose, his works, or the records of his biographers. I have looked over his life of Watts—there it is not.

Hector of Birmingham's letter is scarce less impertinent, and contains an absolute, though perhaps an involuntary, falsehood. Everybody knows that Johnson was born in the year ten, or late in the year nine. Hector attests, that Johnson wrote the myrtle verses for him in the year 1731—and solemnly declares, that it was not till two years after, that he had any knowledge of any of the Por-

ter family, to whom he was then, for the first time, introduced by him. That must be in Johnson's twenty-second year. Strange forgetfulness indeed in Mr Hector, who, if he had considered at all, must have recollected that my grandfather, Mr Hunter, married the sister of this same Porter of Birmingham, his second wife, when Johnson was his pupil, several years preceding that era. During this pupilage, Johnson had frequent access to his master's house and table, and there he saw and fancied he loved the young Lucy Porter, who, early on her aunt's marriage with my grandfather, made her a visit of several months at Lichfield. Then and there, Johnson, a school-boy in his teens, some three or four years older than his beloved, made the verses on receiving from her a sprig of myrtle, which verses he afterwards gave to Mr Hector, without thinking it necessary to declare their previous origin. That this was the fact, on the frequent testimony of the scrupulously ingenuous Lucy Porter and my mother, I am perfectly convinced. Soon after Johnson's death, Boswell earnestly requested me to tell him all I had heard concerning the youthful days of that wonderful mortal; concluding, that my mother knew many such anecdotes, and had probably mentioned them. See how he requites the trouble I took to oblige him! Instances like these have a

tendency so shut up the frank and trusting heart in misanthropic reserve.

I have this instant read your very kind letter on this subject, signed M. S., in the Gentleman's Magazine for February. Another epistle, succeeding it, is also friendly to me, as well as learned and ingenious. I think it likely that letter is Dr Parr's. I should have thought it yours, but that the preceding one has your known signature.

Mr Hayley seems to have forsaken me as a correspondent, not having answered the letter I wrote to him six months ago. You have heard, you say, that Cowper was his coadjutor in writing the life of Milton, now on the anvil—but I hardly believe in such partnership. I wish you would send the parallels you have discovered, between Dante and Milton, to Mr Hayley yourself. He knows of you, and has long since expressed to me his confidence in the powers of your understanding and imagination.

A friend has this minute shown me, in Johnson's life of West, an exactly similar stigma on the Poets to that which Boswell so arrogantly affirms he never uttered. In the fourth volume of his Lives, p. 316., he says of West: "A stroke of the palsy brought to the grave one of those few poets to whom the grave needed not be terrible."

He who, with his pen, thus malignantly brands a class of beings, ever considered as the honours of their respective countries, could have no scruple to utter the twin slander which I copied, in the year 1786, from the records of some of his biographers, if not from his writings, and which he blended with his eulogy on Watts. Praise was so heterogeneous to Johnson's nature, that we generally find him recompensing the self-violence, by some of those malicious reflections on which his spirit luxuriated.

Adieu.—Success attend all your pursuits and wishes—yes, I dare add, *wishes*, because I trust the dangerous days are passed, in which the inexperienced heart is prone to form those whose accomplishment must ultimately be far more painful than their present disappointment. "The stoic influence of the shady Academe, soon broke the bonds of imprudent love."

LETTER XCI.

MRS STOKES.

March 20, 1794.

ALAS! dear friend, if you and Dr Stokes knew how ill I am, you could not have entertained ideas of my undertaking a most arduous literary work, or attempted to stimulate me on the subject. The least degree of intense thinking creates strange and alarming pains and sensations in my head, that seem even to threaten instant dissolution.

If the blessing of health, and if energy of spirit was mine, yet I could not be induced to undertake the surely hopeless task to which you urge me,—the task of attempting to stem that overwhelming tide of injustice and malignity, Johnson's Lives of the Poets. Equal powers of mind, equal learning, equal eloquence, and equal celebrity, enlisting on the side of justice, and desirous to praise as Johnson was to depreciate, would, I do believe, attempt it in vain, since it is so much more acceptable to the mass of mankind to see excellence degraded than exalted. A

pamphlet appeared soon after the publication of Johnson's Lives, exposing to the clearest view the nonsense, as well as envious absurdity, contained in the despot's criticisms on Gray. It was very finely and very learnedly written, yet it passed away unnoticed. The author, Mr Fitzthomas, sent it to me, or probably I had never heard of it.

Were I to flatter myself with the possibility of success in such combat, it would indeed be presumption. To what derision should I be exposed from a thousand quarters!—An unlearned female entering the lists of criticism against the mighty Johnson! No, I can never cease to protest against his envious injustice, but cannot be taught to hope that it is in my power to counteract its irreparable mischiefs to poetic literature. I saw the dark cloud descend, surcharged with pernicious coruscations, and quench the golden day of its fame—I fear for ever.

I am, as I said above, extremely ill. Some deep-seated malady incapacitates me for taking any exercise, corporal or intellectual, without painful difficulty. Of the first, all that my strength will bear is necessary to be tried; the latter is destruction to me:—And shall my friends wish me to bring upon myself those inevitable anxieties which attend projected publication, at a

period when my spirits sink under the slightest pressure of solicitous attention?

It is true, that, through the course of those years which have elapsed since Johnson's Lives appeared, I have been urged, by various literary friends, some of them high themselves in scientific fame, to attempt a regular refutation of his unworthy and frequently absurd decisions. Their too partial opinion of my powers of writing doubtless prompted the request, but could not inspire me with the confidence they feel.

As to Boswell, all my friends unite in thinking it utterly beneath me to pursue a controversy with an ungrateful and impudent man, whom I once believed incapable of such conduct as his late letters about me demonstrate. They prove him capable of insulting any person who cannot inflict the punishment of corporal correction. Defenceless against such a being is every woman, who has neither father nor brother to awe the assailant.

Thank you for this kind information concerning the infamous slander on the poetic race, contained in Johnson's Life of West. It is the twin-stigma, as to sentiment, with that he uttered when praising Watts. It is sent to the Gentleman's Magazine. But that Boswell is too impudent to blush, it would suffuse his sallow cheeks to see

the arrogance of his assertion, that Johnson never expressed such a sentence, thus demonstrated.

Adieu, dear Dr and Mrs Stokes!—Thank you for many proofs of friendship which you have mutually shewn me, and to you both be all your wishes.

LETTER XCII.

REV. R. SYKES, of Foxholes, Yorkshire.

Lichfield, April 20, 1794.

BE assured, that if disease, in changing forms, and in successive periods, had not assailed my frame from the date of that letter with which you favoured me in February, it could not have remained so long unacknowledged. For all its rich contents, as well as for those which came to me from your kind hand last week, accept my sincere thanks.

To a stubborn and feverish cough, which brought on my long existing disorder, impeded respiration, succeeded a violent inflammation in my eyes. I endured it a fortnight, every person's infallible remedy seeming to increase the malady,

till, applying to Dr Darwin, it was soon removed by his healing skill. Beneath the most oppressive influence of this disorder, I was sitting in darkness and despondency when your brother and sister passed through Lichfield, whom, in hours of tolerable health, I should have rejoiced to welcome.—I say despondency; for, alas! the want of sight, of which the disease in my eyes for a time almost deprived me, occasioned an accident the preceding Friday, whose dreaded, but I hope not inevitable consequences, have, in their apprehension, filled my mind with terrors, which no former evil ever inspired.—I hurt my left breast, by slipping against the sharp-pointed ledge of a wainscot, in stooping to reach an hearth-brush. It was on Friday three-weeks. Frequent pain and uneasiness in that region, unfelt till this disaster happened, create apprehensions which I cannot banish, and which rob every surrounding object of the power to interest or amuse me.

I must not, however, fail to observe, that my pains, and consequently my fears, have been less within these few days, for which I am truly thankful to the Giver of all good.

To dear Miss Sykes I wrote in a dark hour of their prevalence, in hopes that the simple remedy of cold salt and water, which cured my eyes, might have the same efficacy in removing her ex-

cellent father's long sufferings in that precious sense, where annoyance is so heavy an evil. They have my truest sympathy.

I knew you would be sorry for my loss in Mr Dewes.

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

Till within this month, let my heart sicken with what sorrow it might, never were the hopes of future and finite comforts so cold in my bosom, as to make me envy the rest of a premature grave, or cease to regret that it had closed over my friends; but since the terror, already mentioned, seized my spirits, I considered the having passed its dreary gate "as a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Should I be so happy to lose these direful forebodings, and recover but a tolerable portion of health and cheerfulness, I trust that yourself and Mrs R. Sykes, persuading your sister to join the party, will realize the plan of excursing to Lichfield. Thus will you add to my escape from the dread of the direst corporal evil, the pleasure of listening to the voice of friendship, restored to us after long absence and distant residence. When the accents of the Westella family form this voice, it comes to my ear mixed with the me-

mory of pleasures past, sweet and soothing to the spirit.

Whether or not I can undertake a journey into Yorkshire this summer, will depend on the state of my mind, and on the likelihood of sea-bathing being salutary or injurious on account of my late accident.

Here are two charming letters of yours before me. By a reiterated perusal will I try to emerge from this gloomy track of egotism.

It is curious to see you disclaiming poetic inherency in such a stream of wit and imagination, and sketching out, as an apology for not sooner answering my letter, so fine a picture of yourself, under the torpid pressure of personified indolence, as fully prove your possession of that inherent power. For the mechanic parts, the measure and the rhyme, we know by experience that you can apply them when you choose it; and whether you do or do not, the poetic essence flows sparkling from your pen the instant it moves over your paper. And so much for the injured bays in which you were wrapt at your birth, and which you degrade by the vulgar name of parsley-bed.

Thank Miss F. Cayley, in my name, for allowing you to indulge me with a copy of that pretty mournful elegy of hers, written under the pres-

sure of sickness and debility. I am sorry that they lay such frequent and heavy weights on her youthful form and soaring imagination. Yet still she sings, like Philomel, with their thorns in her bosom, and sweet are the strains thus warbled.

As to the French wretches, and their destruction of each other, I have only to observe, that the retributive doom seems descending fast upon the murderers of the blameless, the benevolent Louis, and that fair intrepid unfortunate who shared his throne, his woes, and his ignominious fate; ignominious to those who inflicted, not to them who suffered it. The poisoned chalice is returning to the lips of the demons who administered it. I hope Robespierre, Barrere, Santerre, and Legendre will also be obliged to drink it to the last dregs. Indeed, I fully believe that not one of the infernal crew but will be sacrificed to the manes of the royal victims; but I believe nothing of the design of restoring monarchy, imputed to Danton. He is fallen in the struggle of Republican jealousy, in a contention with his fellow-tyrants, whose oppressions outstrip and laugh to scorn the direct curbs of regal despotism.

Those verses to Miss Sykes, with the picture of a king-fisher, have no claim, except that they consist of fourteen lines, to the title they assume,

that of sonnet. Idyllium is their proper appellation. They are either written by the Bard of D——y, or in visible imitation of his manner *. The first eight are not beneath his brilliant and picturesque muse. In the ninth, I dislike the contraction of the word Westella, and the tautologic effect of the word *unseen* after *hides*.—'Tis a make-weight epithet, whose frequent use is the great fault of modern poetry. Our great poets, as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Gray, &c. are lavish in the use of epithets; but they are seldom, like this, of the make-weight species,

* *Verses sent to Miss* SYKES *of Westella, with a Picture of a King-Fisher.*

From Derwent's banks, where, in sequester'd caves,
My feather'd sisters eye the dancing waves,
Shoot on blue wing, or, quivering in the beam,
Tinge, with reflected hues, the passing stream,
An elfin sprite, by friendship's magic spells,
To Humber's shores my trembling flight impells;
There birds me seek, conceal'd, a pensive fair,
Who flies with timorous step the world's broad glare,
And hides, in Ella's peaceful groves, unseen,
A polish'd "gem of purest ray serene."
Eliza bids me seek her Marianne's bower,
Build my safe nest, and charm the halcyon hour;
Nor sigh, nor sorrow, care, nor pain molest,
Nor Love himself, the sunshine of her breast.

where nothing is added to the idea or to the picture, but used merely to eke out the measure, or supply the rhyme. The eleventh line of these verses I cannot endure. It hobbles most ungracefully; and, by distorted emphasis, makes a vulgar maid-marian of your sister's name, Marianne. There is scarcely any supposing, that the fastidious refinement of *his* ear, whose general manner this bagatelle wears, could permit a line so unhappy to escape from his never-wearied chisel. The twelfth is again extremely in his spirit. The two last might be any person's who writes verses tolerably; and the word *sigh*, immediately before the word *sorrow*, is not well, as making the effect precede the cause. However, this couplet certainly forms a close sufficiently poetic to an Idyllium, which involves some of the genuine graces of poetry. It is fortunate when the final lines of any good composition are the best lines; but it is not necessary that it should be so. If a poem, of any class or length, contains beauty, it is a sort of art to which genius should be superior, to make a point of that beauty being always in climax, and most resplendent in its setting ray. Richardson would have called such management a praise-trap. More than any other species of verse, the legitimate, Miltonic

sonnet, admits of a quiet unornamented close, without suffering in the estimation of a reader whose taste is just and discriminating. Adieu.

LETTER XCIII.

MRS ADEY.

Lichfield, June 5, 1794.

UNDER better auspices, your kind letter had been earlier acknowledged. Shadowed over as you have lately found my epistles by the gloom of disease, it pains me to resume my pen beneath their deepened influence. Miss Arden has informed you of my late accident, and *whence* the ides of March have been to me unfortunate. The pain and uneasiness which, with but little intermission, I have since felt, teaching me to fear a deep-seated injury, still farther impair my health, and excite terrors for the consequence, which rob my days of gladness, and my nights of rest. No external mark whatever, either to the eye or touch, has been perceivable from the time I hurt myself to this hour; yet the shooting pains, and sense of occult inflammation, never felt till

after that unlucky bruise, terrify me extremely. By surgical advice, I have applied leeches thrice to the part, according to the present practice of the London faculty. Their bite, which is nothing on the temples, is, on the bosom, a very painful, as well as troublesome operation, and the wounds continue many days sore and inflamed.

If it please God to dispel my apprehensions on this dire theme, it appears to me, that all other disorders must appear as light evils, even should they threaten vital extinction.

Born with an excellent constitution, I enjoyed twenty-three years of almost unclouded health. It was then that misfortune began to counteract that primè blessing: An incurable fracture of the patella, thenceforth combined with inherent love of sedentary employments, till remitted exercise sapt the foundations of corporeal strength. This time ten years another fall, straining the side-tendons of that injured knee, threatened contraction, a much worse evil than the original fracture. To prevent it, I used the warm bath at Buxton to a rash excess, staying in it an hour every night during a whole month. The growing rigidity of the tendons vanished beneath this process;—but, from the general weakness and relaxation it caused, originated that difficulty of respiration, then first perceived, and which has, at

intervals, annoyed me from that period. Now another accident inspires a dread of the worst malady incident to the human frame. Alas! it has, through life, been the deprecation of my prayers.

Remind Mr Adey of the uncommon circumstance of Mr Sneyd, at the opening of our Vicars-hall, in the year 1757, dancing in the same set with the three women who afterwards succeeded each other as partners of his destiny. He had not then a thought of any one of them.

That gay child of artless nonchalance, your friend Swinfen, is not now in our country. On his last residence at Swinfen, he met, at my house, the youthful and bright Louisa S—, of the Shropshire family; a lovely nymph, with high-life connections, and who moves in that sphere, but with fortune too moderate to warrant the discreet indulgence of a fascination which he visibly felt from the soft influence of the finest dark eyes imaginable,

> "Whose ominous lustre seems to shew
> Something which speaks nor yes nor no."

To the cordial reiteration of your wishes to see Miss Arden and myself in Norfolk, I can only say, that inclination can never be wanting in

either of us to realize them;—but mere independence on the will of others does not always confer free agency. Authority itself is frequently not more irresistible than are those viewless and inaudible despots that influence our locomotive powers. Adieu!

LETTER XCIV.

JAMES MITCHEL, ESQ *.

Lichfield, June 9, 1794.

ACCEPT my thanks for the kind present of last week. Your bounteous spirit leaves your friends very largely your debtors. Mr Saville, his daughter, and two more of my neighbours, partook the Epicurean treat the night of its arrival.

The preceding evening gave me the pleasure of dear Mrs Ironmonger's company, that of her sister, and their fair guest, Miss Princep, and a few other ladies and gentlemen. Mr Mitchel's

* An old and valued friend of Miss Seward, residing at Park-Hall, between Evesham and Alcester.

society would have been an animating addition to the social pleasures of my little supper. His virtues and companionable pleasantness are the frequent theme when Mrs I. and myself are tete-a-tete; or with other of his Lichfield friends, who, like ourselves, are conscious of their value.

Business will probably soon draw Mr S. to town. If this purposed excursion takes place, he pleases himself with the hope of visiting you at your charming villa.

Apropos of excursions. Mrs I. tells me you have thoughts of making a party to visit some of those places of curious beauty which adorn our island. Allow me to observe, that the singularly lovely situation of Ludlow, and its classical environs, immortalized by the Comus of Milton, form an admirable head-quarter for a day or two's residence. You might pleasantly devote one of those days to wandering amidst the enchanting mazes of Downton;—scenes which nature has decked with the sublimities of Dovedale, the softness of Ilcham, and the silvan luxuriance of the Matlock mountains; and which art has cultivated with the last happiness, through the taste of its owner, Mr Knight. He has built and inhabits a splendid modern castle, on one of the lawny knowles of this enchanting valley—but, compared to its picturesque and wonderfully varied beauties,

the finest-possible house can have little interest for people of just taste.

What other country can vie with Shropshire in the possession of three such finely-situated towns as Shrewsbury, Bridgenorth, and Ludlow? The first has noble environs—the second is beautifully romantic—the third is unequalled—for, unequalled, as to situation, it is allowed to be by any city or town, not only in England, but perhaps in Europe.

Should you ever go to Downton, inquire for the cold-bath. It is an unique amongst cold baths. Climbing high amidst the rocks, you are led, by winding passages, scooped out of their cavities, to a spot where they form a little rotunda. Except an encircling turf, scarce a yard broad, the whole space of this rotunda is occupied by the purest water imaginable. It sleeps in its marble bed, and the sides of the surrounding rocks are covered with moss, and minerals, and shells. A portion of light is admitted from above, amidst the meeting arches of the rocky concave, which form a roof, impervious to the wind and rain. Shadowy, cool, and translucent, it is worthy to be the favourite shrine of the British Naiads. A little marble statue of a water nymph lies stretched on the turf, bending over the fountain, from whence she seems just arisen.

I wish these recollections of Downton may induce you to make the tour of Shropshire. That the scenic graces of Mr Knight's valley have not more general celebration, is owing to their remoteness from any of the high-roads which lead to cities and towns of commerce, or to places famous for the renovation of health. Adieu!

LETTER XCV.

JOHN COURTENAY, ESQ. M. P.

Lichfield, June 17, 1794.

SIR,—I am much gratified and obliged by the continuance of your attention, and honour you for valuing ingenuousness more than flattery.

The suspected treasons to this Constitution are now fully unveiled to the abashed eye of those who had so unpatriotically derided the just alarms of government.—Now is it that the existence is demonstrated of that close-compacted plot to render this long-glorious, long-happy country, lawless, guilty, and miserable as ill-fated France; to enslave it to the ambition of contending juntos, rising, in turn, to murderous despotism, by basely

flattering the mad passions of the vulgar, till, by the power of rival villains, they fall the unpitied victims of their own crimes.

Thus that shapeless phantom, as the minority termed it, proves, what those who were solicitous for the country's safety believed it, an hydra-headed monster of increasing strength; which, if suffered to thrive unmolested, would soon vie, in strength and fierceness, with the Gallic dragon.

Can we behold that monster of France darting, unresisted, its mortal fangs into the bosoms of all who are but suspected of wishing a less tyrannous form of sway; on all who have the misfortune to have been nobly born, or possessed of wealth, however justly inherited, or fairly acquired;—can we behold, and not desire to strangle the kindred-serpent in its birth? What avails the prostituted name of that tree, under which grimly couches the maturer dragon?—that tree, more blasting than the fabled Upas;—that tree, whose regions are blank with sterility, and covered with the dead.

Ah, Sir! how much should I rejoice to see you dedicating your fine talents to the rescuing your country from the opening jaws of rebellion!—to see you preferring her safety and her glory to the connections of a party, whose leaders now plainly show that they would rather the leaven of sedition

should ferment through the land, unchecked in its dire process, than co-operate with their rivals in necessary energies, in the lopping one branch of chartered freedom *, for a time, which can probably alone preserve its trunk from destruction. You must be sensible that it was the vile abuse of freedom which has wrought this deplored necessity of its abridgement:

> "Still may its blooms our changeful soil endure!
> We only would repress them to secure."

And now let me thank you for your poetic present †. These epistles have wit; their comic fancies are very original, and they are adorned with a sweet ode. Suffer me, however, to confess that I shrink from every passage which supplies fuel to the envious discontents of the ignorant and unpropertied mass of people—"yet happy while they seek no happier state," nor are taught, by the rash ambition of those above them, to barter the solid blessings of protected industry for those specious, but fatal theories, which seek to unite things in their nature incompatible;—the

* The Habeas Corpus Act.—*S.*

† Epistles to Robert Jephson, Esq. from France and Italy.—*S.*

equality, simplicity, and economy of infant, unindebted, and thinly peopled states, with the commerce, opulence, and luxury of a mature one, which had gradually formed different orders and ranks, from the peasant to the king. As to the necessary appendage of such a state, the expensive pomp of a court, you must know that to be a mere imaginary evil, from the inevitable circulation of the sums it costs through the lower orders of the people.

The vastness of our national debt must be allowed to constitute that alloy to great prosperity, and to protected property, and life; which alloy, from some source or other, is the appointed lot of all earthly blessings. True wisdom will be contented with possessing the largest balance of general happiness against general inconvenience, that any nation under heaven enjoys.

Those are the real patriots who counsel the people to renounce the delusive idea of state-perfection, which, amid the frail nature of man, never was, never can be attained; who teach them to beware of the folly of dropping the substance of good for its shadow.

That the shocking example of France should not universally warn the English, is surely the darkest stain of vicious infatuation that ever descended on the national character;—but that any

one of our nobles should be infected with the mania of Jacobinism!—we scarce conceive the possibility. Yet, strange to see! the instance is not even single. To such, and bearing the strong credentials of experience, instead of the divining pretensions of Cæsar's soothsayer, common sense cries out aloud,

> "Remember Orleans' dreadful fate,
> And fear to meet it here!"

But to return to your poem. What a dangerous portrait do the twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third pages display, of the supposed happiness of the French peasantry!—not an hint of their total want of personal and mental freedom;—not a word of that enslaving coercion, which obliges them to rush into battle, or bleed beneath the guillotine! Freedom indeed!—O mockery of the word!—And for such freedom, shall our artificers renounce their chisels and their looms; our farmers and labourers their ploughs? Truly it would be a fine exchange!—the liberty of breaking up the covies of partridges and the forms of hares for the forced abandonment of their homes, their wives and children!—the privilege of shedding the blood of deers and pheasants, for the necessity

of lavishing their own at the imperious mandate of state-quacks and self-authorised murderers.

Your Italian letters are very amusing. From the ridicule of local and classic enthusiasm, no mighty mischief can ensue. It is not then that you scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death, crying, "Am I not in sport?"

There is elegance, as well as archness in your whimsical representation of the Medicean Venus:—but surely *colouring*, as given by the word *blushes*, and by the epithet *red*, ought not to have a place in the description of a statue.

Your ode is recompensing—you owed it to the heroes, poets, and sculptors, that made Italy famous, since you had caricatured them so oddly.

I am pleased to see a rising Courteney, glowing with paternal fire from the shrine of Phœbus. But whence comes it, that he bears arms under a government, to whose preservation a predilection for republicanism is so inimical? Should our soldiery imbibe that contagion, we are lost indeed; and instead of the steeds of Bellona, the dogs of murder will be slipt.

You compliment the bard of Derby highly, but I think with somewhat too exclusive praise. My admiration has been long excited by the fertility and splendour of his fancy, the rich harmony of his

numbers, and the grace with which he has clothed mechanic science, and the other daughters of philosophy, in poetic vestments. I have maintained his claim to be deemed a great poet, against the dissenting voice of the brilliant G. Hardinge, and of Mr Crowe, the public orator at Oxford, both very sweet poets themselves;—and also against that of many other ingenious men. I agree with you, that he is the most philosophic bard the world has produced; but when you term him also the most sublime, I become jealous for the manly superiorities of Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Virgil. One requisite, essential to complete poetic excellence, Darwin greatly wants; simplicity is unknown to his muse. Arrayed in elaborate ornament, I would no more decree the palm of all-transcending sublimity to him, than I would that of beauty from the Venus de Medicis to a court belle, blazing in diamonds, and hung with wreaths of varied flowers, and every coloured foil.

My heart is heavy, and our little city in gloom, for the death, by a nervous fever, of one of the most valuable of its inhabitants—Mr Grove—a gentleman of liberal fortune, and distinguished worth. His poetic genius was considerable; his learning extensive, his integrity taintless, his bounty diffusive, his paternal generosity seldom equalled,

his friendship sincere and energetic. Ere age had enfeebled the light strength of his frame, or shed one wrinkle on his fair brow, he falls; and this day, becomes lost to us for ever. Seldom have the promises of longevity been more flattering.—Alas! a nervous fever, which medical skill strove in vain to subdue, has proved their fallacy. It will be long ere Mr Grove's gate is passed, without a sigh by any of his acquaintance, who knew how to value great and solid virtues; and who feel their power to recompense largely, a little native petulance of temper, and a sometimes capricious strength of prejudice.

Adieu, Sir! my political regrets on your account, neither abate the glow of my good wishes, or my sense of obligation.

LETTER XCVI.

Rev. T. S. Whalley.

Lichfield, July 25, 1794.

Sorry am I, dear friend, to find that you have suffered, at frequent intervals, those terrors which lately sat so heavy on my heart:—yet we cannot

say, with Macbeth, respecting either of those dire diseases, which our feelings have taught us to dread, that "real ills are worse than horrible imaginings;" since, alas! I fear the sufferings those actual evils inflict transcend the darkest pictures of them which the fancy can form. May neither you nor I, nor any whom we love, be ever ascertained on that subject by fatal experience?

Within these last five weeks I have, thank God, found my alarms for the consequences of my late hurt subside very blessedly, and that from abated pain. Hope and cheerfulness would, on this account, reanimate my spirits, had not my daily sufferings, from oppressed respiration, increased of late to what I cannot help supposing a dangerous degree. If well enough to undertake the journey, I think of going to Buxton, and the sea, this autumn, since I found considerable benefit from bathing in both those situations last year.

Respecting the present war on the Continent, mine is the fate of Cassandra, to augur ill on the subject, and to be derided for my fears by yourself, and most of my other friends. When I was your guest, in the summer 1791, you were assured that France would be arrested in the progress of those tyrannic abuses of her revolutionary powers, which she had begun to exert, by the joint efforts of Austria, Prussia, and the German

Princes. You know we disputed often about the probability that their invasion would succeed. The event justified my then predictions.

When, at length, she had completely extinguished, in tyranny, anarchy, and guiltless blood, the rising sun of her freedom,—disgraced the name of liberty,—and, by the horrible example she had set the surrounding nations, awakened their just indignation;—when England, Spain, Holland, and Russia united with the powers already hostilized against an impious nation, that had reduced robbery, murder, and profaneness to a cool and practical system, I thought there was the fairest prospect of their success. I trusted that the principles of the whole people were not so corrupted but that efficient numbers would avail themselves of foreign assistance to restore order, and law, and subordination, and to crush the anarchists.

But when it proved otherwise, the wisdom of retreat became apparent. The broken promises of Russia, the imbecility of Spain, the apathy of Holland, the desertion of Prussia, the poverty of the emperor, and the annihilation of the German principalites, changed, on the part of England, the generous energies of a just war into unavailing and destructive rashness.

Yes, my heart *did* exult in our naval victory. You say—" from every danger of insult on our own

shores it entirely frees us." Surely you contradict that comfortable assertion when you add,—"if we are to be saved from French principles, and all their consequent miseries and guilt, it must be through the blood and fire of the present war." Now, if we are entirely able to defend our own shores, how is it that our preservation from the evils into which France has plunged, must result only from the continuance of a war, the success of which has become absolutely hopeless?

Ah! what infatuation to imagine that sacrificed legions, and national wealth, lavished on the continent, can arrest the progress of internal sedition! What avails it to have discovered that we have twenty thousand miscreants in our own bosom, if we are thus prodigal of the means of resisting their baseness, of our armies, and of the public treasures?

Those added taxes and burdens which must be laid, if the war be continued, will give fatal power to the insidious sophistries of the Painites to seduce necessitous multitudes from their allegiance to their king, and from their faith in the constitution, till sedition and anarchy shall, by the power of numbers, become here, as in France, resistless.

From the moment Mr Pitt declared in the senate, that the war must be pursued at every

hazard, even of national ruin here, he fell in my confidence, from the highest elevation of wisdom and virtue that ever minister attained. I have since considered him as degenerated into a second North, sacrificing the dearest interests of the kingdom to the monarch's obstinacy.

You have imbibed this lamented enthusiasm; and observe, that, "at all events, it is better to fall like a great nation, than to bow our necks to the yoke of multitudinous tyranny and giant infidelity;"—that "from the infidelity, which has hurled its bold defiance against the throne of God, your trust in the final discomfiture and humiliation of France results."

Surely to renounce a contest that proves so irresistibly unequal, is not bowing our necks;—to take care of ourselves, and leave the wicked nation to the God they have offended, is not pusillanimity. The end our force cannot obtain, would probably be effected by the dissentions that would ensue, amid the national banditti in France, on the cessation of foreign invasion, which has proved so ruinous a Quixotism.

The villainy of nations, as well as of individuals, has been too often suffered to triumph, for us to rely, without the highest presumption, upon the interference of Providence in a cause which is become desperate. Such dependance induced the

crusades, which spilt rivers of Christian blood in vain, warring against infidelity.

Strange! that it should still be generally thought right, while the flames are kindling in our own house, to send our servants out upon the fruitless attempt to extinguish a conflagration of hopeless strength in another's;—and where there is the utmost probability that they will perish in the effort!

Let us turn from the sad prospect. Lord Fielding is here with his regiment. He and his lovely lady are living socially amongst us. The Dean has set them his house. They are extremely fond of music. Lady Fielding plays and sings divinely. She speaks of your beloved Mrs Mullin's rival excellence in that line with warm and generous praise. They give private concerts, which are made for them in return. Last Monday, they met a party of twenty-five at my house. Three violins, a violincello, Lady F's harp, and an harpsichord, formed our band. Bending over her harp, when she sweeps her white hands over its strings, and mixes her song with its tones, we see and hear a living Cecilia. Mr Saville and our three diletantes, Miss Parker, Mr Simpson, and Mr Thomas White, joined Lady F. in duets and glees. The saloon in my house is an excellent room for music, and held us all without

crowd, and the evening passed off to the apparent satisfaction of the company. My ill health made me dread the fatigue; but I was fortunately better on that day than I had found myself long before, or than I have been since. Lady F. assembles us at the Deanery on Monday. If I was well I should delight in these parties.

A fortnight since, I passed a few days very pleasantly beneath the spacious and elegant mansion of Sir Nigel Gresley, and amidst its surrounding groves and lawns, which the taste of their owner has rendered Arcadian. Sir Nigel has adorned one of his rooms with singular happiness. It is large, one side painted with forest scenery, whose majestic trees arch over the coved ceiling. Through them we see glades, tufted banks, and ascending walks, in perspective. The opposite side of the room exhibits a Peak valley; the front shews a prospect of more distant country, vieing with the beauties of the real one, admitted, opposite, through a crystal wall of window, the whole breadth of the apartment. Its chimney-piece, formed of spars, and ores, and shells, represents a grotto. Real pales, painted green, and breast-high, are placed a few inches from the walls, and increase the power of the deception. In these are little wicket gates, that, half open, invite us to ascend the seeming forest

banks. The perspective is so well preserved as to produce a landscape deception little inferior to the watery delusion of the celebrated panorama.

Sir Nigel knows well how to animate and diversify the longest summer-day. His sister Louisa, who lives with him, has all the comic graces; and his eldest daughter, an amiable girl of fifteen, wins every person's love and esteem, by the sweetest attentions of innate politeness. One evening, we had a large party on the Trent, which, in its best and clearest expansion, rolls at the foot of the lawn that slopes from his villa, and reflects its white turrets.

Dear Mrs Jackson wrote to me from your beauteous mountain. Her and your accurate descriptions of the alterations at the Phœnix-cottage, risen lovelier from its ashes, enable me to see them perfectly. With such a guest, the respondence of intellect, and the confidence of friendship, must have added zest to the delight of gazing on scenery so lovely, and so long beloved! Adieu!

LETTER XCVII.

Mrs Jackson.

Lichfield, July 31, 1794.

Ever welcome are your letters, my dear friend; but I have received too many proofs of your affection for me to suffer either ungrateful doubts or petulant surprise to take possession of my mind from their casual delay. To circumstances I shall always impute it, never to coldness.

Unworthy should I be of your late assiduous and cordial attentions to me, were not my heart assured that yours will feel pleasure in knowing that I have almost lost those terrors which lately haunted my mind, and excited so many kind exertions on your part to relieve them. To leech-bleeding I believe myself indebted for the comfortable amendment I feel. They were applied four times. The raging heat of the weather, then coming on, induced me to suspend the continuation of an operation so troublesome, succeeded by a week's extreme soreness in each of the petit wounds. Continuing to amend, I hope I shall not have occasion to re-apply this remedy.

The diversity, nay, absolute contradictions, in medical opinions are strange, and somewhat discomforting, as weakning our reliance on their aid. Mr Saville went lately to town to seek that relief for a disorder in his ears, which he happily found from the skill of the celebrated aurist, Maul. His friendship for me induced his consulting two eminent surgeons, who are his personal friends, concerning my late accident. Their opinions, given separately, coincided perfectly with each other, but, surely in the first assertion, contradicted the experience of ages, and in the last, that of late years; for of *those* I believe is the applying leeches to a part suspected of cancerous tendency. That it was the great Hunter's practice we know.

These gentlemen told Mr S. that no cancer was ever produced by a blow; and that to apply leeches to the seat of pain might do an injury, and could be of no service.

Two instances of cancers produced by external injury are of my own knowledge. The mother of a young woman, who formerly lived servant with me, received a blow on her breast that was aimed at her husband. A cancer ensued, and she submitted to amputation;—was then a young woman;—is now an old one, in perfect health. and

never had the least symptom of the returning malady since she lost her injured breast.

Now, if the disease had proceeded from an habit so disposed, and not solely from the blow, it would have shewn itself in some other part, in the course of the ensuing years.

A lady of Shrewsbury was violently hurt on her bosom by her man-servant's thumb, as he was lifting her from her horse. Though then a young woman, in high health, after two year's incessant pain in the part, it was pronounced a cancer. She would not submit to the knife, and died of the disease.

As to leeches, surely these gentlemen reject them against all reasoning from probability of their use, as well as in scorn of recent experience. External injury produces inflammation, and that always precedes induration. Bleeding is found to abate inflammation; and where the heat and pain are local, local bleeding is most likely to be efficacious.

However relieved from horrid apprehensions, more afflicting than actual pain, yet is my general health very indifferent. My difficulty of breathing, on the least exertion, has been more severely and constantly oppressive since my return from Nottingham, early in March. I think I injured

myself there by complying with the earnest request of different companies, that I would read scenes from Shakespeare aloud. This was immediately on recovering from a violent cough and inflammation on my lungs. To read Shakespeare without energy and great exertion, is not within my chapter of possibilities. One evening I read all the principal scenes in Macbeth aloud, and have never breathed freely since.

Thank you a thousand times for your accurate and vivid description of our dear friends on the mountain; of their health, their feelings, their habitation. To have made one in such a party would have proved a golden feast to my heart, my understanding, and my imagination. I think entirely with you, that the society of those we love is of considerably heightened glow in a seclusion adorned profusely with scenic charms, far from the interrupting and engrossing ceremonies of city life, where generous spirits are liable to frequent hectics from the spleen and envy of others.

Mr Whalley's sensibilities must at intervals be darkly gloomed by the terrible aspect of our affairs on the continent; so assured, as he has always asserted himself, of the success of that warfare. But I agree with you, that, guarded as we

are, by our insular situation, from every evil of war, except that which is much the lightest, the expence of it, we certainly experience, amidst our warmest patriotism, how trivial the concern we feel for public misfortunes, compared to that which results from calamities descending on ourselves, or on those who, being really dear to us, become other selves. One is as the passing cloud—at worst the summer storm, whose violence soon exhausts itself, nor long obstructs the returning sun of cheerfulness and peace;—the other are the heavy, deep, continual, all-day rains of desolating winter.

Mr Whalley and I are equally attached to our own form of government; are equally convinced that the subordinations of society are vital to its true happiness and enduring prosperity; but we entirely disagree about the present war. Maintain it, or we are undone, is *his* creed; renounce it, or we are undone, is *mine*. Our fleets will yet, will ever, I trust, be able to defend our water-walled island from foreign invasion;—but what shall quell the increasing force of our internal miscreants, whose dire ambition raises and stimulates the discontents of the lower classes, in the impious hope of being able "to ride the whirlwind, and direct the storm?" What shall pre-

vent the ruinous increase of their influence, if we persist in this hopeless waste of blood and national treasure, now sluicing on the continent? When we have thus entirely lavished the means of curbing the monsters of sedition, public miseries will come to our bosoms with all the force of private calamities, nay, with more complicated and heavier direness.

> " Terror, perplexity, and wild dismay;
> Nor life, nor property secured, nor *home*,
> The sacred blessing of that life, be ours."—

Defend us, O God, from times so perilous!

Let me hear about your home, your new home, when you write to me next; not of its situation,—that you have already described,—but of the sensations with which it inspires you. May health and cheerful energy of spirit be ever its Lares!

LETTER XCVIII.

C. SMYTH, ESQ. of Christ College, Oxford.

Lichfield, August 3, 1794.

I HAVE said, "why tarry his chariot wheels?" Your last letter, inspiring the hope of seeing you soon after its arrival, justified that question, and occasioned this silent remissness in my pen. I hoped to have thanked you in person for a letter which combines the ingenuity and grace of epistolary talent with the kindest spirit of friendship.

What has deprived me of this expected pleasure?—Missing this little city, have you realized the agreeable idea of visiting those scenes

> "Where our old bards, the famous druids, lie,
> And sacred Deva spreads her wizard stream?"

There would your imagination kindle in tracing the vestiges of times long past, and your elegant pencil find employment of the most gratifying kind, where Nature puts on all her grandeur, and wantons in all her luxuriance.

I read not, neither doubtless do you, the Novel trash of the day. Hours are too precious for such frivolous waste, where the mind has in itself any valuable resources; yet are there a few pens which possess the power so to inspirit those fond fancies of the brain, as to render them gratifying to an imagination which demands more to please it than amorous story. Mrs Radcliffe's pen is of this number. Though she aims not at the highly important morality of the great Richardson, nor possesses scarce a portion of his ample, his matchless ability, in discriminating characters,

> "Yet does she mount, and keep her distant way
> Above the limits of the vulgar page."

Her Mysteries of Udolpho is a much superior work to her Romance of the Forest. The first volume of that is fine, the rest heavy, uninteresting, and contain very affected writing. Udolpho contains enough to awaken and interest attention in every volume. I was, however, frequently wearied in the perusal, since, though her powers of scenic description are very considerable, she wants judgment to be aware that the incessant and laboured exertion of those powers counteracts their influence, weakening it by degrees, till attention sinks in languid satiety. Her style is fine, and her poetic mottos admirably

chosen, nor are the interspersed verses without beauty; but her great fort is in displaying terrific images. The object behind the mysterious veil, described at first only by saying what it is not, and the long deserted bed-chamber of the late Marchioness, form a very august exhibition of the terrible graces, who never frown with effect but when they are led by the hand of Genius.—Adieu!

LETTER XCIX.

MISS SYKES.

Lichfield, Aug. 8, 1794.

IT was my design to have been in your neighbourhood ere this time. My general health stands much in need of the renovation I hope for from coast residence and sea-bathing; but I have been vexatiuosly detained by successive disappointments in procuring the chaise I want to purchase in place of my old one.

The season is now too far advanced for the stormy coast of the north. There is little probability of an autumn so calm and golden as might

permit frequent bathing, at Scarborough or Bridlington, through the course of the ensuing September. The warm shore and serene seas of Weymouth, with the convenience of its covered baths, permit bathing even in the winter. From peculiarity of situation, I am informed that the ocean is, in rough weather, a disarmed monster that opens not, as on other shores,

" Her cavern'd jaws, voraginous and vast."

The despotic necessities of my health have therefore induced a reluctant change as to the plan of my marine residence. Still more reluctant it would be, could I have had the least chance of meeting Mrs Sykes and yourself, by taking the Yorkshire coast. Enough of mortification, however, remains to me, in being deprived of a few days residence at Westella and Foxholes. Observation forbids me to expect one of those soft autumns, which sometimes so beautifully terminate the lightsome months, but which I never knew succeed to a summer arid and sultry as this has proved. Dan Phœbus is much too chary of his smiles to our moist island, never dispensing them in such long continuance. Already the winds and rains are become frequent, threatening to ruffle, and stain, and darken the equinox.

Mr Saville sets out to-morrow for Barmouth, on the Welsh coast, purposing to visit his long kind friends, Mr and Mrs Roberts, at their new home, on a romantic mountain, which overlooks the celebrated Vale of Langollen, from whence Barmouth is only a day's journey, leading travellers through the loveliest scenery in Wales. Mr S. and his daughter often speak of your and Mrs Sykes' goodness to them; and, with my cousin White, are frequent in inquiries, which dear Miss Sykes' averseness to her pen seldom allows me to gratify.

Returning home, I trust you met the honoured master of the groves I love, in clear-sighted cheerfulness. Present me affectionately there, and in their vicarage.

LETTER C.

JAMES MITCHEL, ESQ.

High Lake, Sept. 5, 1794.

I PROMISED to write to you, my dear Sir, when I found myself settled on some coast or other, else had you heard from me on my first receiving

the elegant chaise, for which I am indebted to your exertions. There was no exaggeration in Mr Windus' description. I think, and better judges than myself think, it well worth the money I gave for it.

You know I purposed going to Weymouth; but the Court's residence there rendered lovely Mrs Colville's obliging efforts to procure me lodgings on that mild coast wholly fruitless. She was fixed upon it before the royal bustle commenced. It would have been rashness to attempt the seas of Scarborough or Bridlington, lashed into fury as they so assuredly will be by the equinoctial tempests. This place was recommended to me as yielding waves accessible, from peculiarity of situation, as those of Weymouth itself, where they creep on the shore, disarmed of all their rage, by the interposition of Portland Island. A kindred serenity is produced here by a ridge of sands some miles in length. It rises in the ocean, about half a mile from the shore, and is opposite to these downs. The sea, thus divided from the main, is properly enough termed Lake; but wherefore the epithet High is added, it might perhaps be difficult to say. The spring-tides entirely cover this sandy eminence twice in the twenty-four hours; but those of ebb leave a part of it visible. The glassy smoothness of this ma-

rine lake affords charming bathing for cowards. This morning is very stormy, yet I found not, on immersing, that the waves were higher than are those of the Yorkshire coasts in their calmest hours. But if Neptune is a placid, he is, however, a despotic monarch at High Lake, nor suffers us, from the softness of his distant sands, to plunge in far receded billows. Near the coast, they are admirably firm and smooth, two or three miles in extent to right and left. Whether the waters of the Dee and of the Mersey, flowing into this lake, do or do not somewhat abate its saline properties, is disputed. They seem, to my taste, less salt than those of the north coast, but exhibit the varied tints of the ocean.

High Lake is a new place; the house, built by Sir John Stanley, was finished only in 1792. The apartments are handsome and commodious, and the accommodations wonderfully comfortable for a situation without either town, or even village, in its neighbourhood.

The fine downs on which this edifice stands are level and extensive, affording the best walking imaginable. A light and sandy soil leaves them almost instantly dry even after heavy rain. They extend to the cliffs all round the house, whose side-front looks to the main ocean. Beyond the sand island it is open, and to the eye unbounded.

On the left, it flows down, at high-water, into the river Dee, in a broad channel; and the opposite shores of Wales and her mountains are sufficiently, if not sublimely, picturesque.

This has been such a scene of resort all summer, that numbers endeavoured to gain admittance in vain. We are now a very pleasant society—gentlemen and ladies, to the amount of about forty. Miss Remmington of Lichfield, elegant in her figure, and pleasing in her manners, accompanied me hither. This young lady, my maid, and myself, travelled within ten miles of this place very comfortably in the Mitchelin upon wheels. With the odd ancientry of Chester we were much amused; it renders that city perfectly unique. Provokingly detained at Neston, by waiting for horses, we were obliged to borrow the two dusky hours, between seven and nine, for travelling from that place to High Lake. They obliged us to take four, which, being miserable Rozinantes, had difficulty enough in dragging us over roads of frightful ruggedness. If an infant Cynthia had not shed her pale gleams, propitious though faint, I know not what would have become of three cowards, beneath the clouds of night, and in roads so perilous. The clean and lonely village, on the extreme verge of the peninsula, is properly called Neston, originally, I sup-

pose, Nest-Town. It is, indeed, a nest from the storms of the ocean, which it immediately overhangs. We find pleasure in contemplating its neat little church and churchyard on that solitary eminence, lashed by the tempestuous waves.

We made our first entré amongst the billows of High Lake this morning; yet seem they scarcely to deserve the name of billows.—Creatures who fear the sea need not fear a sea like this. The ocean was quite a new sight to the bright eyes of Miss Remmington; and though, from Neston promontory it first met them, crimsoned with the glories of a setting sun, she avowed herself disappointed in the total absence of its expected sublimity. She dies to see it animated by some of its terrible graces; nor can I help wishing that one of the inevitable storms of the equinox may arise during our stay here, to afford her that gratification.

But I have not yet told you the pleasantest circumstance of our excursion. Coy Thomas White came to us from Buxton on Friday, and purposes to stay a fortnight. He enchants the company with his delightful songs. You know his voice is a clear contra-tenor; that his shake is fine, and that he sings with taste and expression. This talent has produced much gratification to the company assembled on our marine promontory,

where we breathe the purest air imaginable; but, as yet, I cannot boast that it has brought health to me. Health, which, like competence, though it may sometimes fail to bestow happiness, and requires auxiliary blessings to secure that rare possession, will yet suffer no happiness to exist independent of its influence.

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

Printed by G. Ramsay & Co.
Edinburgh, 1810.


00097923

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 26 June, 2018